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ATHELSTAN.

A

TRAGEDY.

As it is ACTED at the

THEATRE ROYAL in *Drury-Lane.*

By John Brown.

LONDON,
Printed for LOCKYER DAVIS and CHARLES REYMERS,
againſt *Grays-Inn-Gate, Holbourn*;
And at *Lord Bacon's Head* in *Fleet-Street.*
MDCCLVI.
[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

IL ne faut pourtant pas croire que les Grecs manquent de Feu. Tout s'anime au contraire, tout parle, tout agit dans leurs Ecrits. Mais c'eſt plus l'Action & le Spectacle que les Paroles, & plus la Paſſion & le Sentiment que le Diſcours; au lieu que les François ont ſouvent donné dans le Diſcours & les Paroles pour ſuppleer au Spectacle ou à la Paſſion. Combien de Portraits, de Sentences, & de Lieux communs bien frappés, ont arraché des Applaudiſſe[illegible] qui devoient être réſervés à l'emotion Thea[illegible] qu'on ne ſentoit pas? ce n'eſt que le ſang f[illegible] qui applaudit à la Beauté des Vers dans un Spectacle.

BRUMOY, *Theat. des Grecs.*

TO HIS GRACE

The Duke of DEVONSHIRE,

Lord Lieutenant of *Ireland*.

My LORD,

IT was the frequent Practice of the ancient *Greek* Tragedians, to make their Compoſitions for the *Theatre* ſubſervient to the Welfare of the *State*. The Legiſlator's Wiſdom was inforced by the Poet's Art. Public Guilt was ſtigmatized, and public Virtue applauded. Of this Kind ſomewhat is, or ought to be, ſhadowed out in the following Tragedy.

But it may poſſibly be aſked, "Why this Addreſs from a Writer "who is, and determines to remain, "unknown?"

My LORD, it comes from one, who, altho' he hath not wanted Opportunities, hath ever ſcorned to proſtitute Addreſſes of this Kind to Views of Intereſt. But if it hath for once happened in his Time, that Virtue and Power are eminently united; his honeſt Diſdain of offering Incenſe to the *one*, ſhall not intimidate him from avowing his Reverence of the *other*.

More eſpecially, the natural Relation which the Deſign of this Tragedy bears to your Grace's Conduct, gives its Author a kind of equitable Title, without Leave, to prefix your Name. Thus, while he delineates *Rebellion*, he contraſts it with true *Loyalty*: And to an *Example* of *Se-*

dition drawn from ancient Days, *oppoſes* a *Character* from modern Life, who in the higheſt Station, and moſt perilous Times, hath been the *Reſtorer* of *Unity* and *Concord*.

I am,

My LORD,

with the higheſt Eſteem,

your GRACE's

moſt obedient Servant,

The AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE;

Written by the AUTHOR of the TRAGEDY.

Spoken by Mr. HOLLAND in the Character of the *Genius* of *Britain*.

TO warn the Sons of Freedom to be wiſe,
Lo, Britain's *guardian Genius quits the Skies.*
With Pity, Heav'n hath ſeen thro' many an Age,
The bold Invader lur'd by Faction's Rage;
Seen the dark Workings of Rebellion's Train,
While Patriots plann'd, and Heroes bled in vain.
Behold, your Country's faithleſs Foe, once more
With threatning Squadrons crowd yon hoſtile Shore.
Behold Oppreſſion's bloody Flag unfurl'd:
See Bolts prepar'd, to chain the Weſtern World.
Riſe, Britons, *riſe! to Heav'n and Virtue true:*
Expiring Liberty looks up to You!
Pour on the common Foe your Rage combin'd,
And be the Friends of Freedom and Mankind!
No more let Diſcord Britain's *Peace deſtroy;*
Nor ſpurn thoſe Bleſſings, Reaſon bids enjoy:
Oh, weigh thoſe Bleſſings in her equal Scale!—
Say,—When did Juſtice wear a whiter Veil?
When did Religion gentler Looks diſcloſe,
To bleſs her Friends, and pity ev'n her Foes?
A richer Harveſt when did Commerce reap?
When rode your Fleets more dreadful o'er the Deep?

Or

PROLOGUE.

Or when more bright (hear, Envy ! *hear, and own !)*
Did Truth, did Honour beam from Britain's *Throne?*
Seize then the Happineſs deny'd your Foes:
Nor blindly ſcorn the Gifts which Heav'n beſtows:
Gifts, the World's Envy ! happy Britain's *Pride !*
For which, your generous Fathers toil'd and dy'd !
Let Union lift the Sword, direct the Blow,
And hurl a Nation's Vengeance on its Foe !
As your bold Cliffs, when Tides and Tempeſts roar,
Fling back the mad'ning Billows from the Shore.
One Head, one Heart, one Arm, one People, riſe !
Nor fall, divided Valour's Sacrifice ! —
But if, by Hope of proud Invaſion led,
Unaw'd Rebellion lift her gory Head; —
Treaſon, attend ! — here view the Rebel's Fate;
Nor hope, thy Arm can ſhake a free-born State:
See Blood and Horror end what Guilt began;
And tremble at thy *Woes, in* Athelſtan.

The PERSONS.

ENGLISH.

ATHELSTAN, Duke of *Mercia*,	Mr. GARRICK.
SIWARD, his Lieutenant,	Mr. DAVIES.
EGBERT, an Officer,	Mr. Ross.
THYRA,	Mrs. CIBBER.
EDWINA, her Fellow Captive,	Mrs. BENNET.

DANES.

GOTHMUND, the Captain General,	Mr. MURPHY.
HAROLD, his Lieutenant.	Mr. HAVARD.
GOODWIN,	Mr. BURTON.
DUNELM,	Mr. JEFFERSON.

SCENE, the *Daniſh* Camp near *London*. Time, from the Evening, till Midnight.

ATHELSTAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *The open Camp.*

HAROLD.

GOthmund a Warrior? By our Gods of *Denmark*,
I cou'd have ſack'd ten Cities ſince the Morn.
The lingering Sun goes down, and yet beholds
The *Daniſh* Sword hang pow'rleſs o'er the Foe.

To him, DUNELM.

DUNELM, well met. — What means this vile Delay?
What haſt thou ſeen?

DUNELM.

From yonder Eminence,
Ev'n now, I ſaw proud *London* wrapt in Fire.
HAROLD, behold yon duſky Wreaths of Smoke:
Yon pitchy Cloud is fraught with glorious Ruin.

HAROLD.

Indeed!

DUNELM.

I ſaw the Flames beſiege the Tow'r
Which proudly had ſcorn'd the general Aſſault
Of *Denmark's* Pow'r. Soon ſpread the ſulphur'd Fires,
Mining it's Baſe: at length, with horrid Craſh,
The Pile fell headlong, like a Wreck of Nature.
And as it fell, a hollow Murmur pierc'd
Mine Ear, that ſeem'd an Army's dying Groan.
I ſaw the Breach in the proud City's Wall,
Where our brave *Danes* pour'd in, while Shouts of Conqueſt
Diſmay'd the flying Rear. HAROLD, ere this,
The City's won.

HAROLD.

No more—I'm ſorry for't.

DUNELM.

What! when our Troops thro' ten long Moons have toil'd,
Till Siege and fell Diſeaſe have thin'd our Ranks,
Before this Capital, this haughty *London*,
The Miſtreſs of the Iſland. When her Tow'rs
Are humbled in the Duſt! ev'n then to wear
That clouded Eye! Much it might ſuit a *Briton*;
But ill becomes a *Dane*.

HAROLD.

Have I not Cauſe
To hate our General?

DUNELM.

Grant it: yet no Cauſe
To hate the Victories his Sword hath gain'd
For *Denmark's* Weal.

HAROLD.

Diſhonour blaſt his Laurels!
Ere ſince I won full Glory from our Wars,
He checks my Valour, leſt it ſhould o'ertop,
And ſhadow his—Behold, this very Day,
When mighty *London* falls a Prey to *Denmark*,
I'm pent within the Circuit of a Camp,

On an obſcure and ignominious Charge.
My Sword, inglorious, ſleeps within its Scabbard,
Depriv'd its Prey. Yes: well he knew, this Arm
Had led the Storm: as erſt it did, to him
And his Compeers; when *Norway's* frozen Cities
Sunk at my Frown; when thro' conflicting Hoſts
I op'd the dreadful Track; while far behind
He loyter'd in the Breach, and poorly reap'd
The Gleanings of my Faulcion.

DUNELM.

Peace, brave HAROLD.
Nor let Diſſention blot the gen'ral Triumph.

HAROLD.

Here, DUNELM, here ſhall deep Revenge lie pent,
Muſt'ring it's Rage: but ſoon th' impatient Flood
Shall burſt the Mound, and overwhelm his Pride.
Yes: may I ne'er more win the Wreath of Conqueſt;
Ne'er fall triumphant in the Field of Fame;
But groan out Life, ſtretch'd on th' unmanly Couch;
If I repay not GOTHMUND's uncaus'd Hate,
With deadlieſt Vengeance!

DUNELM.

Let thy Vengeance wait
Some darker Hour.—Behold, where GOODWIN comes.
His Eye ſpeaks Victory: and his glad Step
Prevents the welcome Tidings of his Tongue.

SCENE II. *To them* GOODWIN.

GOODWIN.

Hail, valiant HAROLD! This great Day ſhall ſhine
In *Denmark's* Annals. GOTHMUND ſends thee greeting;
With the glad News of *England's* Overthrow.
Himſelf ſhall ſoon arrive.

HAROLD.

Brave GOODWIN, welcome:
More welcome for thy Tidings. *London* then,

England's chief Boaſt, is fall'n.—

GOODWIN.

Ev'n now it burns.
See yon aſcending Clouds. Yon pillar'd Smoke,
That hides the Welkin, is it's laſt Remain.
The *Engliſh* Pow'rs have left the bleeding Ramparts;
The wide Breach choak'd with Heaps of Slain, on which
We mounted to the Storm.

HAROLD.

How went the Day?
Where fought our Gen'ral GOTHMUND?

GOODWIN.

On the *Thames*.
Soon as the Signal of Aſſault was given,
The *Daniſh* Fleet came on. Our Standard then,
The Raven, hov'ring on his Wing, appear'd
With ominous Glare; and ſeem'd to croak Deſtruction.
Then furious GOTHMUND, from the crowded Decks
Follow'd by ſhouting Thouſands, leapt to Shore
With ruinous Aſſault:

HAROLD.

What? no Reſiſtance?

GOODWIN.

Yes; bloody was the Fray: The Scale of War
Hung doubtful; till the mighty ATHELSTAN,
Mercia's brave Duke, to *Denmark's* aid came on;
Spur'd by a keen Revenge more ſtrong than Glory,
Led his revolted *Mercians* up the Breach,
And mingled in the Storm.

HAROLD.

What next enſu'd?

GOODWIN.

Confuſion and wild Rout. For *England's* Pow'r,
Dreading the vengeful Sword of ATHELSTAN,
Shrunk from his Rage: then *Denmark's* Star prevail'd:
The *Britons* fled: and now, by Right of War,
The City's Wealth, it's captive Youth and Virgins,
Are fall'n the Soldiers Plunder.

HAROLD.

It ſeems then, GOTHMUND owes full half his Conqueſt
To ATHELSTAN's Revenge.

GOODWIN.

Aye, more than half.
Ne'er did ſuch deadly Valour ſweep the Field:
His hoary Head claſp'd in a ſteel rib'd Helm,
He ſprung to Vengeance, and forgot old Age.
With ſuch a headlong Courſe he led the War,
That *Denmark's* Troops, nay his own firey *Mercians*
Linger'd behind: while he, attended only
By Death and Fate, which at his right Hand rag'd,
Thin'd the retreating Foe.

HAROLD.

Thank we the Gods,
Who ſow Diſſention in theſe *Britiſh* Hearts!
Elſe, ne'er had this fair City fall'n our Prey!

DUNELM.

Know ye the Cauſe why this proud Duke of *Mercia*
Revolted from his King?

GOODWIN.

Pride and Revenge.
Some ſuit deny'd him, which the royal Bounty,
Unequal to the Cravings of it's People,
Granted his Foe. No more. His firey Spirit
Mounted to ſudden Rage: with ſecret Levy
He muſter'd all his Pow'rs, and join'd with *Denmark*
To overwhelm his Country.

HAROLD.

Be it ours,
To nurſe this uſeful Treaſon: Thus invading,
While we divide, we conquer.

DUNELM.

Hark! I hear
The Shouts of Victory.

GOODWIN.

GOTHMUND approaches.

His Troops come laden with the precious Spoil
Of this imperial City. Captive Maids,
The ſweet Reward of Valour, grace his Triumph:
And Infants, doom'd to drink the bitter Draught
Of endleſs Slavery in a foreign Clime.

SCENE III. *To them*, GOTHMUND *in Triumph. A Train of Priſoners. And* EGBERT *in Chains, as a Priſoner.*

HAROLD.

Hail, valiant GOTHMUND! *Denmark's* proudeſt Boaſt!
Whom mighty ODIN, the dread God of War,
Hath crown'd with *England's* Conqueſt!

GOTHMUND.

Faithful HAROLD,
The City's won. *London*, whoſe haughty Tow'rs
We ſhook ſo long with terrible Aſſault,
At length is fall'n, and blazes to the Sky.
'Twas Pity, HAROLD, on ſo great a Day,
When the rich Plunder of the War was ſeiz'd,
Thy Valour loſt it's Prey. But fair Diviſion
Of our acquired Spoil, of Wealth and Captives,
Shall bring thee Recompenſe.

HAROLD.

I thank thee, Gen'ral.
Devoted to thy Will, I held my Charge,
To guard our Camp from the out-ſallying Foe;
A Charge leſs ſplendid than the Poſt in Battle;
Yet, as conducing to the general Weal,
No whit leſs honourable.

GOTHMUND.

HAROLD, behold
This Train of Captives: to thy Charge I give them:
But chiefly that ſtern Youth, whoſe Arm oppos'd
Singly to mine, long held the Conflict doubtful.
No common Ranſom ſhall redeem him hence.
Why doſt thou frown? [*to* EGBERT.

EGBERT.

EGBERT.

Becauſe I dare to ſcorn
My Country's Foe.

GOTHMUND.

So haughty in thy Chains?
What Title bear'ſt thou?

EGBERT.

'Tis enough for thee,
To know me ſtill a *Briton:* thence to fear me.

GOTHMUND.

A Conqu'ror fear his Captive! By our Gods,
Speak but another Word, audacious *Chriſtian*,
I'll plunge thee in the deep *Norwegian* Mine,
Among theſe Slaves the Vaſſals of my Sword,
To toil in Darkneſs thro' the live-long Year,
Till baleful Damps conſume thee.

EGBERT.

Yes: bury me in Darkneſs; in the Depth,
Where Slavery drinks the peſtilential Vapour;
For that I've liv'd to ſee my Country's Fall!
I dare thee to the Deed, rapacious *Dane!*
But well I know, thy Hand expects the Ranſom;
Nor aught but Av'rice chains thy Cruelty.

GOTHMUND.

What? Shall I waſte the Hours in fruitleſs Parle
With an audacious Slave!—Lo, *Mercia's* Duke
Comes with his warlike Train. Retire, ye Slaves;
And at an awful Diſtance bow to Valour.— [*They retire backwards.*
This firey ATHELSTAN! Yes, I cou'd curſe [*Aſide.*
His Sword victorious, and wide waſting Arm
That blaſted all my Wreaths; and won the Praiſe
Of this eventful Day!—Hence envious Fame
Shall tarniſh GOTHMUND's Glory; while ſhe whiſpers,
Or haply to the liſtning World proclaims,
That *Britain* conquer'd *Britain.*—Come; fell Hate!
Pour all thy Poiſon on my Heart; and turn

Friendſhip to Enmity!—Should he revolt?—
The Rebel dare not: Nor can e'er repaſs
The Gulph which he hath leapt; and ſevers him
For ever from his Country.—Yet 'tis meet
That Prudence greet him with fair Speech, and Smiles;
Till ſome deſir'd Occaſion yield Pretence,
And ſpurn him off, to Shame.—
Let *Denmark's* Raven wave his dreadful Wing, [*Aloud.*
To hail the glad Approach of ATHELSTAN:
And ſound, in Honour of our firm Ally,
The Inſtruments of War.

SCENE IV. *To them*, ATHELSTAN; *with his Train.*

GOTHMUND.

I greet thee, ATHELSTAN. Thy mighty Arm,
On this great Day, hath ſham'd it's former Doings.
Thro' the red Tracks of Death I ſaw thee ſeek
The King. His Troops, ſtricken with coward Guilt,
Fled trembling at the Sight of injur'd Valour
Wak'd into Wrath. Yes, wondring *Denmark* ſaw,
How Terror ſtalk'd before thee thro' the Streets,
While thy broad Faulcion flam'd; and dread Revenge
Frown'd on thy Helm like Fate.

ATHELSTAN.

No Flattery, GOTHMUND.
Balm to the Fool's, it wounds the brave Man's Ear.
My Sword hath reap'd full Vengeance on its Foes;
And vanquiſh'd ETHELRED with Tears and Groans
Shall rue the Wrongs he did me.

GOTHMUND.

Valiant Duke,
Such Vengeance well became ſuch Wrongs as thine.

ATHELSTAN.

My Wrongs were loud for Vengeance. Pity wept:
But Reaſon choak'd her Voice:—For awful Juſtice
Muſt drop her Sword, unnerve her lifted Arm,

Unbridled

Unbridled Pow'r turn Order into Chaos,
Shou'd Pity melt at proud Oppreſſion's Fall.—
What Youth is that, who from the captive Throng
Comes forth with haughty Strides?

GOTHMUND.

An unknown *Briton:*
Yet fierce in Battle; for his Sword was fatal
To many a *Dane*; and midſt the falling Ranks
Rag'd like a Whirlwind. Mark his fearleſs Mien.
He wears the Pride of Conqueſt, tho' in Chains.
His Eye devours thee, ATHELSTAN.—

ATHELSTAN.

I reck not.
Let him come on: I'll meet his Pride unmov'd.
[EGBERT *advancing.*
Who dares to frown on ATHELSTAN?

EGBERT.

A *Briton.*

ATHELSTAN.

Who art thou?

EGBERT.

One, who heedleſs of thy Rage,
Dares throw his Scorn on Guilt.

ATHELSTAN.

Audacious Captive!
Think'ſt thou I fear thy frown?

EGBERT.

Oh, bleeding *England!*
Behold thy fatal Foe! [*He burſts into Tears.*

ATHELSTAN.

Weep'ſt thou, brave Youth?
Tho' I have pour'd Deſtruction on thy King,
I wage no War with Captives. Gen'rous Warrior,
My Pow'r ſhall ſhield thee, and unbind thy Chains.

EGBERT.

Stand off.—I chuſe to wear them.

ATHELSTAN.

Why that Choice?

EGBERT.

Leſt theſe bráve captive *Britons*, ſhackled there,
Should brand me for a Traitor.

ATHELSTAN.

Heed thee well.
Think what thou art, and where.—

EGBERT.

Thank Heav'n,
I am not ATHELSTAN!

ATHELSTAN.

Nay, I can frown too.—

EGBERT.

Bluſh,—rather bluſh! The crimſon Hue of Shame
Wou'd better ſuit thy Crimes!

GOTHMUND.

Peace, arrogant Youth!

ATHELSTAN.

Who gave to thee this Privilege of Scorn?
This Right of Inſult and bold Accuſation?

EGBERT.

That Pow'r who gave me Reaſon and Humanity;
That awful Pow'r Above, who bids me dare
To ſtrip falſe Treaſon of her Maſk of Pride;
And ſhew the Hag, in her own Shape and Hue,
The fouleſt Fiend of Hell.

ATHELSTAN.

Thy Chains protect thee!

GOTHMUND.

GOODWIN, lead forth theſe Captives to the Fleet;
And let the firſt fair Breeze that fills the Sail
Waft them to *Denmark's* Shore.—HAROLD, bear hence,
And guard that Inſolent. [*Pointing to* EGBERT.

EGBERT.

Farewell, brave Friends!

My

My faithful Countrymen! I weep your Fate,
Doom'd to th' Oppreſſions of a barbarous Clime!
Oh, may ſome friendly Storm in Pity riſe,
And bid the Fury of devouring Seas
In Mercy ſwallow you!—Accurſed Treaſon!
Lo, thy devoted Train! Oh falſe, falſe ATHELSTAN!

[*Ex.* EGBERT, HAROLD, GOODWIN, DUNELM, *and Captives.*

ATHELSTAN.

Go, froward *Briton!*

GOTHMUND.

Valiant ATHELSTAN,
Heed not a Captive's Clamour. *Denmark* now
Boaſts thee her Friend. And for undoubted Proof
Of that Eſteem, wherewith I note thy Valour;
Behold the precious Spoils my Arm hath won
Amid the gen'ral Plunder: Gold or Captives,
Lands, Palaces, whate'er inventive Paſſion
Can fancy for Enjoyment, waits thy Will:
Command it; for 'tis thine.

ATHELSTAN.

Of Gold, or Lands,
The Plunder of the War, I reck not aught.
For, to the noble Mind, a great Revenge
Outweighs all other Good. This I have reap'd
Full-meaſur'd; Of my thankleſs Country's Blood
My Sword hath drank, ev'n to Satiety:
No other Boon it craves.

GOTHMUND.

Brave ATHELSTAN,
Ev'n as thou wilt.—Has then no precious Spoil
Inrich'd thy Valour?

ATHELSTAN.

Yes: one beauteous Captive,
Won in the City's Storm: and now conſign'd
To SIWARD's Care, a brave and faithful Friend,
Who leads her hitherward. So winning ſweet!

The ſurly Troops gaz'd on her as ſhe paſs'd,
And Silence ſpoke their Wonder.

GOTHMUND.

Such a Fair
May haply mourn in ſecret; that her Lot
Fell to thy aged Arm. Some youthful Warrior
Might better ſuit her Wiſh.

ATHELSTAN.

I mean, to ſhield her
From the rude Will of inſolent Deſire.

GOTHMUND.

Indeed!

ATHELSTAN.

Indeed.—It was her chaſte Requeſt.
And mark me: Tho' my Arm hath quell'd it's Foes,
Yet ATHELSTAN would bluſh, to wreak his Vengeance
On a defenceleſs Woman.

GOTHMUND.

By what Chance
Did'ſt thou obtain this Captive?

ATHELSTAN.

While the Storm
Rag'd in the Streets; Fate led my conqu'ring Band,
Where this fair Captive mourn'd the Lot of War.
I found her kneeling; with uplifted Eyes,
And Majeſty reſign'd, imploring Heav'n.
Rouz'd by the Shouts of War, ſhe roſe: Her Train
Fill'd all the Place with female Lamentation:
But ſhe, in Grief ſuperior, check'd their Cries,
And grac'd her Woes with regal Dignity.
With ſuch a noble Mien ſhe ſu'd for Mercy,
That Vengeance ſtood ſubdu'd: while nameleſs Graces,
Beauty, and Mildneſs, and majeſtic Grief,
Like Guardian Pow'rs which Heav'n had planted round her,
Check'd the rude Acceſs of unhallow'd Rage:
That ev'n the Sons of Violence drop'd the Sword,

To gaze at awful Diſtance.---Tow'rd her Tent,
This Way ſhe moves with her attendant Train.
Behold her here.

SCENE V. *To them*, THYRA, EDWINA, SIWARD, *and female Attendants.*

GOTHMUND.

Indeed, ſupremely fair.

ATHELSTAN.

THYRA, be comforted: Nay, dry theſe Tears.
Elſe ſhall I deem my too officious Cares
Loſt on a thankleſs Heart.

THYRA.

Oh, ATHELSTAN!
Whoſe Mercy ſpeaks thee brave! Forgive theſe Tears.
For my dear Lord, to me than Life more dear,
Theſe Sorrows flow!—Indeed, my thankful Heart
Melts in warm Gratitude to thy kind Care,
Which ſav'd me from the Horrors of this Day.
But, Oh!—my Huſband!

GOTHMUND.

Why theſe ſtreaming Tears?
What of her Huſband? Did he fall in Battle?

ATHELSTAN.

That is her Fear:
Tho' Rumour yet ſpeak doubtful of his Fate.

THYRA.

Too ſure, he's fall'n!—Ye gen'rous Warriors, hear,—
Hear a poor Captive's Pray'r!—Oh, let your Guards
Conduct my faithful Servants to the Field:
Or give me Safe-guard thro' the deathful Scene;
I will diveſt me of my Woman's Fear,
And with a *Scythian* Boldneſs tread in Gore;
Drag off the Heaps of overwhelming Foes,
Till I have found my EGBERT's dear Remains,
To give them Burial. The laſt, mournful Duty
I e'er can pay his Love.

ATHEL-

ATHELSTAN.

Deſpond not, Fair one:
Haply, he yet may live.

THYRA.

Oh, flatt'ring Hope!
Grant me but That!—But That, ye Pow'rs of Heav'n!

GOTHMUND.

Now, by our Gods of *Denmark*, ATHELSTAN,
This is too bright a Fair, for Age like thine
Idly to gaze on.

ATHELSTAN.

Beauty, thus afflicted,
Merits my Pow'r's Protection.

GOTHMUND.

Is ſhe not
The Captive of thy Sword?

ATHELSTAN.

True, but the Sword
That won, ſhall guard her.

GOTHMUND.

What if GOTHMUND's Will
Shou'd raiſe this Fair one from the captive Throng,
To grace his Bed?

ATHELSTAN.

By Law of War ſhe's mine;
And I have ſworn Protection.

GOTHMUND.

From thy Foe
To ſhield thy Captive, were a Taſk of Praiſe
Worthy thy Arm. But when a true Ally,
Thy Friend in War, intreats ſo ſmall a Boon—

ATHELSTAN.

GOTHMUND, the Friend whoſe erring Wiſh demands
What Honour cannot yield—I pray, no more—

GOTHMUND.

If GOTHMUND's Friendſhip, in thy thankleſs Heart,
Inſenſible to all my proffer'd Bounty,

Stands

Stands at ſo cheap a Price—Protect thy Captive.—
Let thy Pow'r ſhield her as it may.—Lead on.—

[*Exit* GOTHMUND.

ATHELSTAN.

Imperious *Dane!* Would'ſt thou bend ATHELSTAN
Beneath thy Pride?—His parting Words and Looks
Darted Contempt.—This the Reward of Conqueſt?
This, Valour's Recompenſe?

SIWARD.

'Twas what I fear'd.—
Why did Revenge ſeduce thee from thy King!
Bear Witneſs, Heav'n, if e'er I trod the Field,
Or bar'd my Sword in ſeeming Aid of *Denmark*,
Save in the honeſt Hope, to check thy Vengeance.

ATHELSTAN.

What? To a thankleſs King, a favour'd Foe
Baſking beneath the royal Smile, to yield
With coward-like Submiſſion?—Friend, no more.
The Dye of Fate is thrown.

SIWARD.

Didſt thou not ſee,
How Paſſion kindled, while with ardent Gaze
He ey'd fair THYRA's Charms? His Soul hath caught
A ſwift and deep Infection. Mark th' Event.

ATHELSTAN.

Weak is thy Fear. Tho' bold in Violence,
He dare not wake my Rage.

THYRA.

Oh gen'rous Duke,
Behold me at thy Feet! I ſee the Storm
Faſt gath'ring o'er my Head! Redeem, redeem me
From this rapacious *Dane!* I dread not Death;
Whoſe Image, from my earlieſt Age of Woe,
Hath been the calm Companion of my Thoughts.
Then let thy Arm, which on this fatal Morn
Did ſhield me, now compleat it's gen'rous Care.
My forfeit Life is thine. In Pity kill me,

Ere yet Diſhonour blot my Innocence.

ATHELSTAN.

By my good Sword, which won thee in the Storm,
Again I ſwear, not *Denmark's* proudeſt Threat
Shall wreſt thee from me.—SIWARD, are my *Mercians*
Camp'd in their ſeparate Quarter?

SIWARD.

Aye, my Lord:
Weſtward, a Mile; on a fair riſing Ground,
Faſt by the River's Brink.

ATHELSTAN.

This Night I meant
To paſs in Council with the General GOTHMUND,
On future Enterprize. But ſince his Pride
Brooks no Controul;—wou'd Heav'n I had not come!
Since it is thus:—At leaſt his Pride ſhall ſeek me:
And if I find him bent on Violence,
The Morning Sun ſhall ſee me quit his Camp.
Haſt thou prepar'd fair THYRA's Tent by mine?

SIWARD.

I did command it ſo.

ATHELSTAN.

Retire we then.

THYRA.

I merit not thy Care. Why ſhou'd I live,
When my dear Lord is loſt, and *England* fall'n!

ATHELSTAN.

Touch not on That:—For by this Arm it fell.
Yes: I have waſh'd my Footſteps in the Blood
Of my deſpairing Foes.---But oh, for whom!
I'll think no more.—Come, THYRA, to thy Tent.

End of the FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *The open Camp.*

GOTHMUND, HAROLD, DUNELM.

GOTHMUND.

HAST thou not ſeen her, HAROLD?

HAROLD.

Much I have heard.
Her Beauty dwells on ev'ry Soldier's Tongue,
And half eclipſes Conqueſt.

GOTHMUND.

Oh, ſuch Beauty!
HAROLD, her Eye's bright Beam might thaw the cold
Norwegian's Breaſt; or warm the frozen Sons
Of *Lapland* into Love.—Oh Earth and Heav'n!
My Soul's on Fire!—The Glories of the War,
The Wreaths of Conqueſt ſicken on her Sight.
Avaunt, Ambition! yield thy Throne to Love!
HAROLD, ſhe muſt be mine.

HAROLD.

What lets thee then?
What Bar ſo ſtrong, to guard her from thy Wiſh?
Each cobweb Hindrance to thy Breath ſhall yield,
If thou but *will* her Thine.

GOTHMUND.

May I ne'er taſte the Warrior's Lot in Death,
Ne'er quaff the rich Meath in th' infernal Courts,
Where mighty ODIN rules the glorious Dead,
If I not ſeize her Beauties.—But, brave HAROLD,
This delicate Captive is no common Food,

Like what we ſnatch in ev'ry City's Plunder,
For groſs Deſire to feed on. I wou'd win
Her Soul's Conſent: wou'd kindle mutual Paſſion,
To meet my Flame: At leaſt, by fair Perſuaſion
Wou'd temper Pow'r; that the Effect might ſeem
Without all Shew of Violence. HAROLD, haſte thee
To the fair Captive's Tent. Tell her, the Gods
Of *Denmark* claim their wonted Sacrifice
Of captive Youths, and thirſt for *England's* Gore.
But if her dear Conſent ſhall crown my Wiſh,
Our Gods propitious will accept her Smile,
In Ranſom for their Blood. Paint forth the Terrors
Of the dread Sacrifice; the Victims bound;
The howling Incantations of our Prieſts
Invoking Hell; the glittering Faulcion bar'd;
The ſtreaming Gore, and Horrors of the Altar.
The mournful Tale ſhall melt her into Grief,
And Pity plead Conſent.

HAROLD.

I wait thy Will.
Yet were my Counſel worthy GOTHMUND's Ear——

GOTHMUND.

What woud'ſt thou?—Say.—

HAROLD.

Some captive *Briton* beſt
Wou'd bend her Pride.

GOTHMUND.

Not ſo. Theſe ſtubborn *Britons*,
Unconquer'd ev'n in Chains, defy our Swords;
Awful in Ruin: Like their kindred Oaks,
Tho' blaſted by the Thunder of the War,
They proudly bear their ſcorched Ribs aloft,
And brave the Pow'r that ſtruck them. Therefore, HA-
That Hope is vain. [ROLD,

HAROLD.

Perſuaſion, ſure, wou'd flow
Prompt, and more pow'rful from ſome Captive's Tongue,

To

To Death or endleſs Slav'ry doom'd; yet ſooth'd
With Hope, and promis'd Freedom. For the Speech
Of mimic Art is weak and ſinewleſs,
To the ſtrong Workings of the lab'ring Soul,
When Paſſion glows within.

GOTHMUND.

'Tis well advis'd.
Then lead ſome captive *Briton* to her Tent,
On this great Purpoſe. But o'er all I fear
This haughty ATHELSTAN: He claims her His,
By Law of Battle; and hath ſworn Protection.

HAROLD.

Is GOTHMUND's Pow'r ſo weak, then, that he dreads
A Traitor's Frown?

GOTHMUND.

Nay, by our Gods, I'll ſeize her;
Tho' he, and all the witching Pow'rs of Hell,
Tho' the weird Siſters, and each horrible Shape
That haunts the midnight Foreſt, hemm her round
With Magick Incantation.—HAROLD, ſpeed thee.
I'll wait thee in my Tent.— [*Exit* GOTHMUND.

SCENE II.

HAROLD.

Now, Spirit of Miſchief, riſe! Welcome, foul Fiend,
That rid'ſt the Carr of Night; and ſcatter'ſt Plagues
With unſeen Hand!—DUNELM, he fears me not:
Nor dreams what Tempeſt ſoon ſhall blacken round.
Did'ſt thou not mark that frowning Captive, EGBERT?

DUNELM.

I did.

HAROLD.

He beſt will bear the General's Love
To THYRA's Tent.—Command him hither, DUNELM.
[*Exit* DUNELM.
His gen'rous Heart ſhall burn with fierce Diſdain;

And ſtrengthen THYRA's Virtue into Scorn,
Which Pity cannot bend.—So black a Purpoſe
Known and proclaim'd, may haply rouze to Rage
The Duke of *Mercia*; in whoſe fiery Breaſt
Lies Fury, ripe to catch, and blaze in Flames.
Oh, for ſome ſwift Occaſion, that my Breath
May kindle Diſcord into deadly Feud!
Like angry Clouds that ſail on warring Winds,
Their fierce conflicting Wrath ſhall meet in Thunder,
And Ruin cloſe the Fray!—

SCENE III. *To him*, EGBERT.

HAROLD.

Welcome, brave Youth.
Thy Fame, and known Pre-eminence in Valour,
Have call'd thee to a generous Taſk of Duty,
For *Britain's* Weal.—Thou know'ſt, by Doom of War,
Full fifty Captives to our Gods muſt bleed.

EGBERT.

So doom your fancy'd Gods, the vain Creation
Of Fear and Cruelty. But righteous Heav'n,
That ſees your Blindneſs with a pitying Eye,
Deteſts the Sacrifice.

HAROLD.

Prevent it then.

EGBERT.

Name but the Means. If my devoted Blood
Can ſave my guiltleſs Countrymen from Death,
I yield it to the Altar.

HAROLD.

Valiant EGBERT,
A gentler Taſk is thine. A captive Beauty
Brightens yon Tent: She hath ſubdu'd our General.
The Rage of Love is on him. If thy Tongue
Can win her to his Bed.——

EGBERT.

HAROLD, no more.

Think'ſt

Think'ſt thou, becauſe I drag the Chain of War,
My Soul muſt wear your Shackles? Fall'n a Captive,
I bear a *Briton's* Heart: The Coward only
Earns Safety by Diſhonour.

HAROLD.

Yet many a *Briton*
Wou'd deem it Service, worth a brave Man's Care,
To ſave devoted Innocence from Death,
At this cheap Price. Weigh'd with the Blood of Man,
What is this unknown Woman's Weal or Woe,
This captive THYRA's Honour?

EGBERT.

THYRA?—THYRA?
What THYRA?

HAROLD.

ATHELSTAN's fair Captive THYRA.
What Terror's in that Name? What wonder moves thee?

EGBERT.

Ye Pow'rs of Heav'n!—HAROLD, if thou'rt a Man;
If ever brave Compaſſion touch'd thy Breaſt;
If e'er the tender Names of Wife and Huſband,
The bleeding Anguiſh of deſpairing Virtue,
The Love of Worth, or Piety to Heav'n,
Did ſway thy Heart to great and gen'rous Deeds,
Or melted thee to Pity, hear me now!
That THYRA is my Wife!

HAROLD.

Indeed? thy Wife?

EGBERT.

So ſure, as Infamy is hov'ring o'er her,
My Wife! Devoted to this Ruffian's Luſt!

HAROLD.

EGBERT, I love the Valour of a Foe:
And Worth like thine turns Enmity to Praiſe.
How will thy Boſom burn with honeſt Rage,
When hiſſing Scorn proclaims——

EGBERT.

Oh, thou haſt ſhook
My firmeſt Fortitude! I thought her dead.
When ſhe was loſt, what more cou'd EGBERT fear?
Hence cold Deſpair had gather'd o'er my Soul,
Wrap'd it in Ice from ev'ry Senſe of Ill,
And chain'd the ſtruggling Tear. But her lov'd Name
Hath rouz'd me from this Lethargy of Woe,
Hath thaw'd the frozen Horrors of my Heart,
And melted me to Childhood. Grief and Joy,
And Fear, and Hope, in tumult riſe within me:
While thro' the moiſtened Chanels of mine Eyes
Theſe Sorrows flow:—Yes, for thy Sake, thy EGBERT
Weeps his Captivity!

HAROLD.

Waſte not in Tears
The precious Minutes, Speed thee to her Tent,
Diſhonour and Pollution hover o'er it.

EGBERT.

Perdition ſeize the Robber! Gen'rous HAROLD,
Lead me to aid this helpleſs Innocence.
Hear me, brave Countrymen! and witneſs Heav'n,
That to redeem your death-devoted Blood,
EGBERT wou'd yield his own — But oh, my Wife!
What! yield her to a Ruffian's Luſt? — Nay rather,
I'll daſh her Beauties into Wounds and Horror,
For Luſt to ſtart at.—Lead me to her Tent.
My lab'ring Heart will burſt!

HAROLD.

Th' attending Guard
Shall guide thee to her Tent. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. *Changes to* THYRA'S *Tent.*

THYRA, EDWINA.

Sure, 'tis ſome warning Pow'r that whiſpers here.
My beating Heart forebodes th' Approach of Fate,
And labours with th' Event.—EDWINA, come:
Friend

Friend of my Life, dear Partner of my Woes!
Teach me to combat theſe ſurrounding Terrors,
That overwhelm my Soul!

EDWINA.

Take Comfort, THYRA:
All may be well.

THYRA.

Oh, this unpitying *Dane!*
Raging with Inſolence, and red with Slaughter!
What cannot he attempt!

EDWINA.

Diſtruſt not Heav'n.
The valiant ATHELSTAN hath vow'd Protection.
Wrong not his generous Care.

THYRA.

May ev'ry Pow'r
That watches o'er the juſt and brave, protect him,
And crown his Days with Honour!

SCENE V. *To them*, DUNELM.

DUNELM.

Beauteous Captive,
A Meſſenger from GOTHMUND——

THYRA.

Oh, my Fears!

DUNELM.

He wills, that all depart,
Save only Thee: for he hath much to ſay,
Meet for thy private Ear.

THYRA.

Alas, EDWINA!
What ſhall I do! Oh leave me not, EDWINA!
Undone, undone!

DUNELM.

Nay, weep not, beauteous Captive.
Let all depart; elſe ye provoke his Rage. [*Ex.* DUN. ED.

THYRA.

Now which Way ſhall I turn me! Whither fly
To ſhun theſe gathering Horrors!—Wou'd I had fallen
Beneath the Battle's Fury! That the Spear
Had pierc'd my Heart! Or that ſome flaming Tow'r
Had been my funeral Pile! —Why was I ſpar'd,
To ſink in deeper Woes!—Oh, pitying Heav'n,
If e'er thy Care regarded Innocence,
Reſtore me to my Lord!

SCENE VI. *To her*, EGBERT.

EGBERT.

Behold him here!

THYRA.

Is't poſſible!—'Tis He! my Lord! my Huſband!
Oh happy Change! Oh Bliſs unſpeakable!
Support me, heav'nly Pow'rs! Support me, EGBERT.
I faint, I faint! Oh, take me to thy Breaſt!—

EGBERT.

Thou Crown of all my Joys! Thou Cauſe belov'd
Of all my bittereſt Pangs! Do I once more
Infold thee in theſe Arms!

THYRA.

Too bounteous Heav'n!
And are my Sorrows fled! Shall Hope once more
Viſit this Breaſt? And do I live to ſee thee!
Alas, my Lord! thro' what unnumber'd Woes,
Thro' what a Sea of Horrors have we paſt,
Since laſt we parted!

EGBERT.

Such is Heav'n's high Will.
England is fall'n! The Majeſty of Empire
Is ſunk by Fate! Deſtruction rears her Banner:
The fatal Raven croaks; and *Britain's* weeping Genius,
Yielding his Charge, flits to ſome happier Clime!

THYRA.

THYRA.

Oh fatal Day! be thou for ever wept!
Yet ev'ry future Morn ſhall hear my Praiſe,
And Gratitude ſincere ariſe to Heav'n,
For this dear Boon, this Cure of ev'ry Woe,
That I have found my EGBERT!—Say, my Lord,
Who led thee to theſe Tents?

EGBERT.

Thro' the wide Waſte
Of mortal War, I ſought my virtuous THYRA,
To ſave her from the Foe: But ſought in vain.
Then ruſhing on the thickeſt War, my Sword
Edg'd by Deſpair, I mow'd my Way; to where
GOTHMUND, intrench'd in triple Rows of Spears,
Stood like our Country's Fiend. He met my Arm.
But ſoon th'o'erwhelming Files that hemm'd him round
Ended the mortal Strife; and led me hither,
The Captive of his Pride.

THYRA.

Bleſt, bleſt Event!
Sure, 'twas ſome unſeen Angel rul'd thy Fate;
Now, barbarous GOTHMUND, I defy thy Threats!
Oh Coward! to inſult a helpleſs Captive! [*Burſts into*

EGBERT. [*Tears.*

Soul of my Soul! The frowning Fates ſurround us!
That thou art here, reſtor'd to Life and Me,
This grateful Tear I offer up to Heav'n!
But if ſome heavier Ruin hangs unſeen,
Unkind and cruel was the Sword that ſpar'd thee!—

THYRA.

But thou art come, like ſome bleſt Pow'r from Heav'n,
To baniſh all my Fears! Ah, why that Groan?

EGBERT.

Dear THYRA! See,—theſe Chains!—

THYRA.

THYRA.

Wou'd I cou'd wear them for thee!

EGBERT.

Generous THYRA!
I know thy Love: I do believe thou woud'ſt.
Think then, what Pangs muſt rend thy EGBERT's Heart,
To ſee thy Worth inſulted, drag'd by Pow'r
To foul Diſhonour; while this cruel Chain
Binds down his honeſt Vengeance!

THYRA.

Since I have found thee,
Tho' fetter'd in this ignominious Chain,
I know not why,—but ev'ry Fear is fled:—
There's Safety in thy Arms.—

EGBERT.

My Soul's beſt Part!
Wrap not thy Heart in blind Security!
Helpleſs thou ſeeſt me here, as Age or Childhood:—
I fear the riſing Storm. Forgive me, THYRA,
If in the Tempeſt of my Rage, theſe Chains
Shou'd ſtrike thee to the Earth! the cruel Taſk
Of deſp'rate Love! and blot that Heav'nly Form
With deadly Wounds and Blood; to reſcue thee
From this remorſeleſs *Dane!*

THYRA.

But ATHELSTAN,
Who ſav'd me midſt the Horrors of this Day---

EGBERT.

Who? *Mercia's* Duke?

THYRA.

Hath bravely ſworn Protection.

EGBERT.

Curſe the Traitor!
'Twas he, whoſe Sword, unſheath'd by lawleſs Fury
Againſt his Country, and the beſt of Kings,

Hath

Hath brought Deſtruction on us.—May his Treaſon
Fall, like an impious Arrow ſhot at Heav'n,
And cleave his hoary Head!

THYRA.

Yet, if I err not;
Ere this, Conviction of his Crime hath wrought
Repentance in his Heart.

EGBERT.

No: plead not for him;
He hath undone us all!

THYRA.

Forgive me, EGBERT,
If Gratitude work ſtrong within my Soul.—
He ſav'd me from the *Dane*. A Mind ſo noble,
Tho' headlong driv'n down by the Tide of Paſſion,
Muſt ſoon return to Virtue.

EGBERT.

Cou'd I hope it?
Cou'd I but hope he wou'd rejoin our Arms,
We yet might reſcue Thee, and reſcue *England!*

THYRA.

Behold, he comes!—Now, EGBERT, curb thy Rage,
Think: He is ſtill the Guardian of my Honour.
Aſſume the winning Eloquence of Grief,
Lab'ring beneath it's Wrongs: His generous Heart
Will melt in Sympathy.

EGBERT.

My virtuous THYRA,
For thee, and for my bleeding Country's Sake,
I'll choak the Pang I groan with.—

SCENE VII. *To them*, ATHELSTAN, SIWARD.

ATHELSTAN.

Down, proud Heart!
Oh, I am rent with Anguiſh! Never more

Shall

Shall fair Peace keep her Sabbath in my Breaſt!
Unthankful *Dane!*

SIWARD.

What leſs cou'd Reaſon fear
From unrelenting Robbers?

ATHELSTAN.

Blind Revenge!
Oh whither haſt thou led me!—Say, proud Captive,
Who brought thee to theſe Tents?

THYRA.

Brave ATHELSTAN,
This is my Lord, my EGBERT.—Honor'd EGBERT,
Lo, *Mercia's* Duke, who ſav'd me from Diſhonour.—

ATHELSTAN.

Yet, rul'd by ſullen Pride, he ſcorns to thank me.

EGBERT.

That thou didſt ſave her from the Rage of War,
Binds me thy Friend: But that thy trait'rous Arm
Hath madly drawn thy Sword againſt thy King,
Unties that private Bond of Man with Man,
And bids me ſtand thy Foe.

ATHELSTAN.

To injur'd Honour
A brave Revenge was due.

EGBERT.

Oh ATHELSTAN!
Thy Vengeance, in its fatal Courſe, hath ſwept
Thy Friends and Foes in one promiſcuous Ruin!
Childhood and Age, the Gentle and the Brave,
And helpleſs Innocence which never wrong'd thee,
Have felt the Fury of thy mad Revenge.
Had'ſt thou been *England's* Friend, theſe bloody *Danes*,
Had fled our Shores: No *Briton* then had drag'd
Theſe ignominious Chains! nor helpleſs THYRA
Had call'd in vain on Earth and Heav'n to ſave her!

THYRA,

THYRA.

Dire is our Fate's Decree, when EGBERT weeps!
Oh cruel GOTHMUND!

EGBERT.

False, false ATHELSTAN!

ATHELSTAN.

No more:—Why rend ye thus my tortur'd Heart?
Thy Words are Scorpions in my Breaſt.—Raſh Man,
Take back thy THYRA:—Guard her as thou can'ſt:—
Farewell: I'll hear no longer.—

THYRA. [*catching his Garment.*

Gen'rous Duke!
Leave us not thus! Leave us not to Deſtruction!
We have no Hope but thee!

ATHELSTAN. [*breaking from her.*

Thy tears are vain.—

SIWARD.

Spurn not her Griefs—

ATHELSTAN.

SIWARD, if thou'rt my Friend—

EGBERT.

Nay, but thou yet ſhalt hear me:—Acroſs thy Steps
I'll throw my Body, tho' thy Hand were arm'd
With Lightning, till thou hear me—

ATHELSTAN.

Urge me not:
Urge not thy Fate—

EGBERT.

Alas! can Fate do more!
Oh ATHELSTAN! but that I know thy Virtues,
I wou'd not ſtoop t' intreat thee. Life I reck not.
Then ſpite of thee, I dare to be thy Friend:——
Yes; I will ſearch thy Heart; will there dethrone
Uſurping Paſſions that have baniſh'd Reaſon,
Eclips'd thy Virtues in their noon-tide Sphere,
And darken'd all their Brightneſs!

ATHEL-

ATHELSTAN.

Let me paſs—

EGBERT.

By Heav'n, I will not, till I have paid the Debt
Due to thy generous Soul.—Yes; thou haſt been
My THYRA's guardian Genius:—Hear me now,
Hear *Me*, as thine: Sent by all-gracious Heav'n,
Kindly to warn thee of that Sea of Guilt,
In which thy Rage hath plung'd thee!—Hear the Voice
That calls thee, to return to Honour's Path;
Bravely to quit thy guilty League with *Denmark*,
And ſave poor bleeding *England!*

ATHELSTAN.

Witneſs Heav'n,
How dear hath *England's* Happineſs and Fame
Been to my Soul! How, on this dreadful Morn,
When Vengeance led me to the Field of Death,
My bleeding Heart wept for my Country's Woe,
And half ſubdu'd Revenge!—Behold theſe Tears—
Theſe Tears proclaim, I am a *Briton* ſtill!

EGBERT.

Then act a *Briton's* Part.—

ATHELSTAN.

Ungrateful King!
Why didſt thou wake my Rage! why urge my Vengeance
To lead Deſtruction on!

EGBERT.

Nay, wrong him not.
'Tis Paſſion's Blindneſs rules thee.—Heav'n and Earth
Witneſs the untir'd Bounties of his Hand.
But when bold Expectation, nurs'd by Vanity,
Brooks no Denial; and aſſumes to weigh
Its own fantaſtic Worth;—what earthly Pow'r
Can ſatisfy it's Cravings, or fill up
Th' unfathom'd Meaſure of Self-Love and Pride!

SIWARD.

Or grant thy Worth neglected :—Grant the Slave,
Fool, Flatterer, Whiſperer, reptile Sycophant,
To thee prefer'd in Honour :—Virtue ſtill,
Wrapt in the Majeſty of calm Diſdain,
And ſelf rever'd, in her own Dignity
Wou'd check Revenge ; wou'd welcome Injury
With manly Scorn, and for the publick Weal
Forget all private Wrong.

ATHELSTAN.

No more, no more !
Wou'd Heav'n, I had not done it.—

EGBERT.

Imperial *London !*
Fair *England's* Boaſt ! The Glory of the Iſles !
How art thou fall'n ! Thy Palaces and Tow'rs,
Low-level'd with the Duſt, now ſmoke in Aſhes !—
Heav'n ! as we paſs'd in Chains the Streets along,
How the loud Shrieks of raviſh'd Maids and Matrons,
The Groans of *Britons* weltring in their Blood,
Of Infants writhing on the bloody Spear,
Transfix'd my Heart !—

THYRA.

In vain the holy Prieſt,
The trembling Sire, and widow'd Wife, in vain
Clung to their Altars, and implor'd for Mercy :—
The Ruffian Foe with ſacrilegious Hand
Dragg'd them to Death ; and to his Idols grim
Did ſhed their innocent Blood !—

ATHELSTAN.

What have I done !
Oh *Britain !* hapleſs *Britain !*

SIWARD.

Doſt thou weep ?
Come, fair Repentance, Daughter of the Skies !
Soft Harbinger of ſoon returning Virtue !
The weeping Meſſenger of Grace from Heav'n !

Lovely in Tears.—Now melt his generous Heart!
Infuſe kind Pity for his Country's Woes!
Wake his great Soul; and bid him ſhine once more,
It's Pride, Support, and Glory!—

ATHELSTAN.

'Tis too late!
Oh Madneſs! Headlong Madneſs!

EGBERT.

Ne'er too late
To turn to Virtue!—THYRA, SIWARD, kneel;
And ſue for Mercy to our ruin'd Country!—[*They kneel.*

THYRA.

Cou'd a poor helpleſs Captive's Pray'r be heard!—

EGBERT.

Behold in us, Millions of guiltleſs *Britons*——

SIWARD.

Pleading for Life and Freedom!——

EGBERT.

Hear the Groans
Of martyr'd Chriſtians——

THYRA.

Bleeding for their Faith——

SIWARD.

Imploring Help from thee!——

ATHELSTAN.

Riſe, *Britons*, riſe.—
I yield, I yield!—Yes; *England*, I am thine!—

EGBERT. [*They riſe.*

Oh happy Change!

SIWARD.

Oh generous ATHELSTAN!

ATHELSTAN.

And yet---to ſtoop!---meanly to ſue for Pardon!---

SIWARD.

He, he alone degrades his State, who ſtoops
To wrongful Deeds; theſe done, 'tis truly brave
To ſue for Pardon, and who ſtoops, is greateſt.

ATHEL-

ATHELSTAN. [*embracing them.*

Come to my Heart! my Friends! my Guides to Peace!
Your Words, like Light from Heav'n, have pierc'd my Soul!
Oh Blindneſs, Frenzy!--Gen'rous, injur'dKing,
How can I e'er behold thee!

EGBERT.

Truſt his Goodneſs.
His chief Delight is Mercy: and when Juſtice
Demands the awful Sacrifice of Life,
Reluctant he confirms the harſh Decree.

SIWARD.

Ev'n now a truſty Spy return'd, informs me,
Our valiant King, muſt'ring his ſcatter'd Pow'rs,
Ere Morning dawns will ſtorm the *Daniſh* Camp:
Lead but thy valiant *Mercians*——

ATHELSTAN.

Grant me, Heav'n,
On a wide Heap of routed *Danes* to die!
I aſk no more.—Come, let us quit the Camp.—

EGBERT.

Alas, brave Duke, I am a Captive here.
I cannot go. A thouſand guiltleſs *Britons*
Muſt bleed, ſhou'd I eſcape.—But to thy Care,
Here I bequeath a Truſt more dear than Life.
Let THYRA be the Partner of thy Flight.

THYRA.

Muſt I then leave my Lord!
Severe Decree! Shall I not ſee my EGBERT,
Ere I depart?

EGBERT.

My ever honour'd Wife,
Be ſure thou ſhalt.

ATHELSTAN.

THYRA, retire: and while I ſeek the *Dane*,
To lull Suſpicion, wait us in thy Tent,

Prepar'd for Flight.—Now SIWARD, to my *Mercians*.—
Tell them my Wrongs from *Denmark*: paint the Pangs
Of my unfeign'd Repentance: rowze their Valour
To quenchleſs Rage, that may atone my Guilt.
That to the Ghoſt of ev'ry martyr'd *Briton*
We ſlew in Fight, a Hoſt of *Danes* may die.

[*Exeunt.*

End of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. THYRA's *Tent.*

GOTHMUND, GOODWIN.

GOTHMUND.

HER Huſband, did'ſt thou ſay?

GOODWIN.

So Rumour ſpeaks.

GOTHMUND.

Amazement—Then he hath play'd falſe with HAROLD,
And quench'd my Hope. — Did'ſt thou not ſay, thou ſaw'ſt him,
Walking the Camp?

GOODWIN.

He ſhot athwart the Tents
With proud and haſty Step, that ſeem'd to ſcorn
The Ground he trod.

GOTHMUND.

Then we ſhall meet him here.
This is his Wife's Pavilion. If he comes,
I mean to ſpeak him fair. Perſuaſion mild
Shall firſt allure Conſent: Shou'd that be vain,
From the falſe Calm a ſudden Storm ſhall riſe,
And bury him in Ruin.—Is the Guard
Arm'd, and at Hand to ſeize him?

GOODWIN.

Arm'd, and ready.

GOTHMUND.

Behold, he comes.

GOODWIN.

'Tis he: I ſee his Chain,

That glitters in the Moon-beam.

GOTHMUND.

GOODWIN, hence:
Wait within Call.--- [*Exit* GOODWIN.

SCENE II. *To him*, EGBERT.

GOTHMUND.

Briton, I greet thee well.
Is the fair Captive won to GOTHMUND's Love?
Why art thou dumb?

EGBERT.

Why do I ſee thee here?

GOTHMUND.

Leſt Inſult ſhou'd approach fair THYRA's Tent,
I come to watch her Welfare.

EGBERT.

As the Wolf
Guards the defenceleſs Lamb.

GOTHMUND.

Haſt thou forgot
Whoſe Chain thou wear'ſt?

EGBERT.

'Tis Thine: and thence I ſcorn it.

GOTHMUND.

EGBERT, beware: Thou know'ſt the Victor's Pow'r:
Wake not his Rage.—

EGBERT.

I bear a guiltleſs Mind,
Thou can'ſt not conquer.—

GOTHMUND.

Hence, audacious Captive.
I know thee THYRA's Huſband.—Tremble, *Briton*:
Nor ſport with angry Pow'r!

EGBERT.

Hence, ruffian *Dane!*—This Tent is ATHELSTAN's.
THYRA's his Captive: and kind Heav'n ordain'd him,

To reſcue Innocence from Luſt and Rapine.

GOTHMUND.

Yet I am calm.---But have a Care, raſh Youth---
For ATHELSTAN :---What Pow'r but mine can ſhield
From the juſt Vengeance of his injur'd King? [him
Whate'er the Traitor won, he won for me.
Like theſe rich Territories, THYRA's mine
By Conqueſt: Let not then weak Shame or Pride
Obſtruct the Victor's Wiſh: Be juſt, brave EGBERT,
And yield her Beauty to its new Poſſeſſor.

EGBERT.

Come, honeſt Pride! Oh fill my ſwelling Heart,
And arm mine Eye, and point my Tongue with Scorn,
Keen as the Scorpion's Sting!—By Heaven, this Chain,
This Chain alone bids Inſolence be bold,
Which elſe were dumb, as Cowardice or Guilt!
Oh, for my honeſt Faulcion! which this Morn,
O'erwhelming Numbers wreſted from my Hand!
Yes: I wou'd hunt thee thro' the Battle's Rage:
Surrounding Guards, and doubling Ranks in vain
Should ſhelter thee!

GOTHMUND.

Hell's Curſes blaſt thy Pride!
Had not the buſy Guards foreſtall'd my Vengeance,
The Lightning of my Sword had cleft thee down.
Shall I bear this? Hoa, GOODWIN! Bring the Guard!
[*To him* GOODWIN.
Seize that inſulting Captive: Drag him hence,
To dark Impriſonment, and ſeven-fold Chains,
Till the Fleet ſail for *Denmark*.

SCENE III. *To them*, THYRA, EDWINA.

THYRA.

Mercy, Mercy!
Oh GOTHMUND, at thy Feet!

GOTHMUND.

Let go thy Hold. —
Quick, bear him to his Priſon.

EGBERT.

Why this Violence?
I am your Captive: Bear me where ye may.

THYRA.

Muſt we thus part! — Oh cruel *Dane!* In Mercy
Deſtroy us here together!

EGBERT.

Strive no more:
Waſte not thy generous Tears on barbarous Pow'r:
For what can Right, when Luſt and Madneſs rule?
Yield to thy Fate. Farewell! [*Exit* EGBERT *and*

THYRA. [GOODWIN.

My Lord! my EGBERT!
Oh loſt, loſt, loſt! —

GOTHMUND.

Thou yet haſt Pow'r to ſave him. —

THYRA.

Oh name the Taſk which Honour ſanctifies,
And I will die to ſave him! — Bid me roam,
An Exile from my Country, thro' the Climes
Where frozen *Lapland's* wintry Waſtes extend;
Doom me for ever to th' unwholeſome Mine,
Where hopeleſs Slav'ry toils: — I'll bleſs my Fate,
So I may ſave my EGBERT.

GOTHMUND.

Fear not, THYRA,
So harſh a Doom — That delicate Frame was form'd
For gentler Offices. — Crown but my Love,
And EGBERT ſhall be free.

THYRA.

Peace, Monſter, Peace!
Nor wound my chaſte Ear with thy Words, which taint
The wholeſome Air.

GOTH-

GOTHMUND.

Elſe ſhall my Vengeance ſweep
Thy ſtubborn EGBERT to far diſtant Shores.
Yes: he ſhall dwell with Darkneſs, pine with Want,
Rot 'midſt the cold Damps of a hideous Dungeon;
And live a ling'ring Death!

THYRA.

Oh horrible!
Thou can'ſt not mean it!

GOTHMUND.

By our Gods, I do!
While thou, the Minion of the general Camp,
Shalt feed unbridled Luſt; till wrinkled Age
Doom thee at length a houſehold Drudge, the Scorn
Of loathing Appetite!

THYRA.

Oh hear me Heav'n!
Hear me, thus kneeling, low on Earth! Deſcend,
Ye guardian Pow'rs that watch o'er Innocence,
Deſcend, and ſoften his relentleſs Heart,
Or I am loſt for ever! — Hear me, GOTHMUND,
For the chaſte Matron's Sake, who gave thee Birth!
Oh, hear!

GOTHMUND.

Nay, yield thee; or his Fate is ſeal'd. —

THYRA.

Pity my captive State! a helpleſs Orphan,
With not a Friend! an outcaſt from my Country!
Unknown to all; ev'n to myſelf unknown!
A poor loſt Infant, wreck'd on *England's* Coaſt!
Perhaps an Infant *Dane!* — Oh why, EDWINA,
Why was I reſcued by thy Father's Hand!
Elſe had my Sorrows found a peaceful Grave
In the devouring Deep!

GOTHMUND.

An infant *Dane?*
Give me but Proof of That —

THYRA.

Concurrent Proofs
Beſpeak me ſuch: Wrong not thy Country then:
Wrong not thy Friends: Oh think thou ſeeſt thy Friends,
And thy dear Relatives now plead in me;
And thus with bended Knees and lifted Eyes
Beſeech thy Pity!—ſpeak, EDWINA, ſpeak!
Oh tell the Tale of Woe! The mournful Tale
Needs not the colouring of artful Tongues,
To melt the hardeſt Heart!

GOTHMUND.

I charge thee, Woman,
Be bold in Truth: or inſtant Death awaits thee.

EDWINA.

Hear then the Tale, which at the hallow'd Altar
I dare confirm. — Near to the Coaſt of *Weſſex*
My Father liv'd; an humble Villager.
'Twas on a Time when Storms had vex'd the Deep,
We ſpy'd a *Daniſh* Veſſel driv'n on Rocks,
Then ſwallow'd in the Flood. The Storm rag'd on:
And on the rolling Billows, mountain-high,
This helpleſs Babe came floating. The next Wave
Had waſh'd her to the Deep: 'Twas then my Father
Snatch'd her from Death. — Soon as our Cottage [Warmth
Recall'd her into Life, the lovely Babe
Smil'd on us, all unconſcious of her Woe.
Tears guſh'd from ev'ry Eye. My generous Father,
Generous tho' poor, and now a Saint in Heav'n,
Embrac'd the Child, and vow'd her as his own.
Beauty, with ev'ry winning Quality,
Grew with her Growth: She was our Village Pride.
EGBERT at length, drawn by her peerleſs Fame,
Beheld, and lov'd, and won her.

THYRA.

Generous EGBERT!

GOTH-

GOTHMUND.

But ſay — Did this poor Babe alone ſurvive
The general Wreck?

EDWINA.

Alone: The reſt were ſwallow'd
By the devouring Flood.

GOTHMUND.

But tell me, Woman,
Why did ye judge the ſinking Wreck, a *Dane?*

EDWINA.

'Twas from the yellow Streamers, hoiſted high
In Signal of Diſtreſs.

THYRA. [*Taking a Chain from her Neck.*

Behold this Chain, [*Gothmund takes the Chain.*
By me held ſacred from my earlieſt Age:
This, haply, may confirm the wondrous Tale.

EDWINA.

That very Chain adorn'd her infant Neck:
Inwrought with myſtic Figures, it hath tir'd
Each letter'd Sage's Eye.

GOTHMUND.

The Signatures
Are of a *Runic* Import: which our Bards,
And Prieſts, and Sages magic-taught, can ſpell.
I'll bear it to their Search.

THYRA.

May Heav'n infuſe
Soft Pity to thy Heart!

GOTHMUND.

Cou'd I but win [ſures:
Fair THYRA's Love!—The Camp ſhall pour its Trea-
Freedom and Wealth, the Spoils of conquer'd *England,*
Shall join to grace thy Tent: while thou ſupreme
Shalt triumph o'er thy Fate, and bleſs the Hour
That ſpoke thy Birth, and gave thee to the *Dane.*

THYRA.

Oh mighty GOTHMUND!

GOTH-

GOTHMUND.

Nay, dry theſe Griefs; tho' much indeed they grace thee.
Come; let thine Eyes beam with their own ſoft Fires,
And all thy Form awaken into Beauty.
Dwell not with fruitleſs Woe: Let bitter Tears
Rain from the Captive's Eye, condemn'd to Exile,
And endleſs Slav'ry: But a happier Lot
Awaits fair THYRA's Choice; and pleads Acceptance.

THYRA.

My EGBERT! O my Huſband!

GOTHMUND.

Weep no more;
Thy Tears can ne'er recall him.

THYRA.

Little know'ſt thou;
What ſtrong eternal Bands of mutual Love
Have knit our Souls: Divided Happineſs
We ne'er can know. Joy, like one common Sun,
Muſt ſhine on Both or Neither: and if Night
Hath overcaſt his Fate; my Sun of Life
With his, is ſet for ever. — Give me the Chain. —

GOTHMUND.

Nay, by my Sword, the Chain
Is dearer to me than a Diamond's Mine.
This Chain's the Clue, ſhall guide me to thy Birth;
Which, once reveal'd, ſhall ev'ry Tie diſſolve
That binds thee to theſe *Britons*. *Denmark* then
Shall claim thee Her's; and GOTHMUND plead her Rights. [*Exit* GOTHMUND.

THYRA.

Unfriended Innocence implores in vain!
EDWINA, range the Camp! ſeek out my EGBERT!
Tell him, his THYRA kneels in vain for Mercy,
And bid him fly to ſave her! — Oh, I rave!
E'en now, relentleſs Ruffians bind him down,
In the drear Depth of dark Impriſonment;
Far from his helpleſs THYRA.

SCENE

SCENE IV. *To them*, ATHELSTAN.

ATHELSTAN.

Sure, the Voice
Of Female Lamentation ſtruck mine Ear.—
THYRA!—whom do I ſee?—What, drown'd in Tears?

THYRA.

Oh, loſt, for ever loſt!—This barbarous *Dane!*

ATHELSTAN.

What of him?

THYRA.

Bent to do a Deed of Horror,
Ev'n now he hath dragg'd to dark Impriſonment
My guiltleſs Lord!—He threatens inſtant Violence!

ATHELSTAN.

Curs'd be the Day on which he touch'd our Shores!
Come; let us from the Camp:—Ere this, my *Mercians*,
Warn'd of th' Oppreſſions of this bloody *Dane*,
And touch'd with Pity for their Country's Woes,
Burn to rejoin their King.—Come, gentle THYRA,—
EDWINA, come.—My Preſence ſhall protect you,
Safe thro' this hoſtile Camp.

THYRA.

Too generous, Duke!
Can I deſert my Lord!

ATHELSTAN.

Then ſtay, till GOTHMUND——

THYRA.

Oh, ſave me, ATHELSTAN!
Haſte, let us hence!—I have no Help but thee!
Alas, my virtuous EGBERT, muſt I leave thee!

ATHELSTAN.

Nay, fear not for him:—Ere yon Moon hath rode
Her Circuit round the Skies, I'll pour my Thunder
On theſe accurſed *Danes*, and give him Freedom.
SIWARD, ere this, throughout the Ranks hath wak'd

Brave Diſcontent, and kindled all my War.——
Come, let us quit the Camp.——

SCENE V. *To them*, GOODWIN.

GOODWIN.

Hear, ATHELSTAN!
Our General ſends thee Greeting.—Sacred ever
He deems the Rights of War: yet Pow'rs ally'd
Own the Priority of peaceful Claim.——

ATHELSTAN.

'Tis granted.—What of this?—

GOODWIN.

That captive Fair,
Won by thy Proweſs in the City's Storm,
By Law of War is Thine: An earlier Right
Our General pleads: For Proofs of Circumſtance
Speak her by Birth a *Dane*.

ATHELSTAN.

No falſe Pretence
Shall wile her Virtues from me.—THYRA, ſpeak:—
Is't not a feign'd Pretence?

THYRA.

Oh mighty Duke!
Tho' Ruin hangs upon the Acknowledgment;
I fear, I am a *Dane*; and thence unworthy
A generous *Briton's* Care!

ATHELSTAN.

Wrong not thy Worth:
For, as within the Foreſt's howling Depth,
Where griſly Bears, and Pards, and Tigers roam,
The wild Roſe blooms; So oft in ſavage Lands
Untutor'd Virtue dwells: Where'er 'tis found,
It claims Defence: Virtue is Virtue's Care,
Alike in ev'ry Clime.—Then tell me, GOODWIN,—
For ere I yield my Captive, I will know:—

What

What Proofs of Circumſtance——

GOODWIN. [*producing the Chain.*

Behold this Chain——
With *Runic* Characters——

ATHELSTAN. [*ſeizing the Chain.*

Ye Pow'rs of Heav'n,
That weave th' inextricable Maze of Fate!
What do I ſee!—If 'tis your ſacred Will
To make me bleſt, now lend a pitying Ray!
This very Chain, my once victorious Arm
Rent from the proud Neck of a ſlaughter'd *Dane.*—
Oh Joy, Oh Grief! Oh Rapture to my Soul!
How,—when,—where,—whence? Speak, GOODWIN!
[THYRA, ſpeak!
Or Hope and Doubt will heave my Heart to burſting!

THYRA.

Ah me! I was a helpleſs Infant, loſt
Ere Mem'ry yet was ſeated in the Brain!

ATHELSTAN.

Oh bleſſed Hope! Such was my EMMA too!—
EDWINA,—can'ſt thou tell?—Range, range the Round,
Where Mem'ry hoards her Treaſures, and brings back
Old Time! Confirm the Whiſpers of ſweet Hope,
And give me back my Child!

EDWINA.

Heav'n! doſt thou weep
A Daughter loſt?

ATHELSTAN.

And long have wept in vain!—
Since ſhe was loſt, full twenty Years have ſhed
Their various Woes on my poor orphan'd Child!—
When furious HALFDEN ravag'd *Mercia's* Cities,
Then was my Child (this very Chain ſhe wore!)
Snatch'd from her Cradle by unpitying *Danes*
And thence convey'd to *Denmark's* barbarous Shore!

THYRA.

Oh gracious Heav'n!

EDWINA.

EDWINA.

On that lamented Time,
This very Chain circling her infant Neck,
By my dear Father's Hand was THYRA ſnatch'd
From the devouring Deep!

ATHELSTAN.

'Tis She!—My Child! my Child! [*Embracing her.*

THYRA.

My Father!

EDWINA.

Gracious Heav'n!
Who can behold this Sight, and not diſſolve
In Tears of Joy!—

ATHELSTAN.

And was it mine, to ſave thee!
Oh Pow'rful Nature!—For ſince firſt I ſaw thee,
My EMMA's Sweetneſs ſtruck on ev'ry Senſe:
Some ſoft Attraction drew!—ſome unknown Charm
Work'd in my Soul, and bade me wiſh thee Mine!—
Haſte, GOODWIN, haſte to GOTHMUND: there diſcloſe
This Tale of Joy, this wondrous Burſt of Bliſs!
Tell him, that Nature cancels ev'ry Claim,
And gives my EMMA to her Father's Love!

GOODWIN.

I'll forthwith to his Tent: A Minute's Round
Shall bring thee his Reſolve. [*Exit* GOODWIN.

ATHELSTAN.

Eternal Providence!
To whoſe all-ſeeing Mind, th' unmeaſur'd Round
Of wide Events is preſent! far beyond
The narrow Ken of a weak mortal Eye!
Deep and unſearchable, yet juſt and true,
Are thy ador'd Decrees, O Pow'r divine!
Thou ev'n beyond the Darings of fond Hope,
Haſt from the Boſom of the raging Seas
Reſtor'd my long-loſt Daughter!—

[*Embracing her paſſionately.*

THYRA.

THYRA.

Happy, happy!
Oh Bliſs unſpeakable! And do I live,
Thus to be preſs'd to a fond Parent's Heart!
To hang upon his Breaſt! To know the Joy,
The heart-felt Raptures that attend the Names
Of Child and Daughter!

ATHELSTAN.

Darling of my Soul!
Oh Comfort of my Age;—Yet, yet one Grief
Checks the ſweet Tumult of my honeſt Joy!
One piercing Grief lies heavy on my Soul!—

THYRA.

Can I relieve thy Pain?

ATHELSTAN.

Not all the lenient Balms thy Love can pour,
Can ever give me Reſt!—Oh Madneſs, Madneſs!
I have undone my Country!

THYRA.

Alas, the Pity!
Think not ſo deeply of it.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh, I am vile!
I dare not lift my guilty Eyes to Heav'n!
Yet Heav'n hath ſhow'r'd a Bleſſing on my Head,
Beyond the World's wide Empire!—What may this mean!—
Sure, 'tis the Prelude to ſome dire Event!
A paſſing Gleam, ſent by almighty Vengeance,
To deepen future Woe!

THYRA.

Nay, rather deem it
The kind Encouragement of Heav'n, vouchſaf'd
To thy returning Virtue!

ATHELSTAN.

Heav'n is juſt,
Yet merciful:—Let me but reſcue *England*,
And I ſhall yet be bleſt!—

SCENE

SCENE VI. *To them*, GOODWIN.

GOODWIN.

Hear, *Mercia's* Duke!
GOTHMUND decrees, that ev'ry Right of Peace
Yields to the Conqu'ror's Pow'r; and claims his Captive.

ATHELSTAN.

Sooner your Swords ſhall drink my warm Life-blood—

GOODWIN.

Hoa! DUNELM—Bear her off!—
[DUNELM *and the Guard appear, and ſeize* THYRA.

THYRA. [*as they carry her off ſtruggling.*
Help! Help! Undone!
Dear Father, help!—

ATHELSTAN.

[*Part of the Guard remain and intercept him.*
Damnation! Treach'ry! Treach'ry!—
Slaves, let me paſs ——

GOODWIN.

Not this Way, by the Gods—

ATHELSTAN. [*drawing his Sword.*
By Heav'n, I'll mow my Paſſage with my Sword.—

GOODWIN.

Diſarm him— [*the remaining Guards diſarm him.*

ATHELSTAN.

Villains! give me back my Daughter!

GOODWIN.

Rave not, old Man!--She now is GOTHMUND's Charge.

ATHELSTAN. [*Ex.* GOODWIN *and Guards.*
Inhuman Dogs!—Tell me—in Pity tell me—
Where is my Daughter! Give me back my Daughter!—
Oh, Mercy, Mercy, Heav'n!—

EDWINA.

Alas, my Lord!
I fear She's loſt for ever!—

ATHELSTAN.

Vengeance! Vengeance —
EDWINA, come!—I'll to this bloody *Dane*,

And frown him into Stone!—Loud in his Ear
I'll thunder all my Wrongs; and ſhake his Soul
With Sounds as dire, as when at general Doom
The dreadful Trump ſhall wake the guilty Dead!
Shou'd he be deaf to injur'd Nature's Claim,—
I'll to my *Mercians*, and let looſe Revenge!
Swift o'er theſe ruffian *Danes* I'll pour the Flood
Of War; and drown the guilty Camp in Blood;
Rage thro' their Tents, like fierce conſuming Fire;
And among Heaps of ſlaughter'd Foes expire!

End of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. GOTHMUND'S *Tent*.

GOODWIN, DUNELM.

GOODWIN.

IS ſhe ſecur'd?

DUNELM.

Faſt:— Barricado'd ſtrong
By doubled Ranks of Guard: whoſe levell'd Spears
Hem round the Tent.

GOODWIN.

Did not the Duke of *Mercia*,
Attempt to wreſt her from them?

DUNELM.

Yes: with Fury,
Fierce as the foaming Boar that whets his Tuſks,
When the bold Hunter hath deſtroy'd his Young,
He clamour'd to the Guard. They mock'd his Rage.
Thrice he eſſay'd, with phrenzy-like Deſpair,
To pierce their Ranks: Then Fury ſunk to Grief.
Melting in Tears, he ſu'd for one ſmall Grace:
Pray'd that EDWINA, her late fellow Captive,
Might ſhare her Griefs. His Suit in Sport was granted.
EDWINA now weeps o'er her.— But he comes,
To plead his Right with GOTHMUND.

GOODWIN.

Fierce will be
Their meeting Frown; when Rage encounters Rage;
In either Breaſt a Storm.

DUNELM.

I'll to my Watch:
E'en let the Tempeſt roar. [*Exit* DUNELM.

GOODWIN.

My Charge is here.

SCENE II. *To him*, ATHELSTAN.

ATHELSTAN.

Vile Caitiff! Where's thy General?

GOODWIN.

Fair Words, *Briton.*
Choak thy foul Breath. The General's in his Tent.
What woud'ſt thou?

ATHELSTAN.

Tell him, ATHELSTAN is come.
His Heart will ſpeak the reſt.

GOODWIN.

Ev'n now he ſits
On ſecret Council: Nor can Clamour gain
Admittance to his Ear.

ATHELSTAN.

Inſidious Hell-hound!
Or bring us Face to Face; or by yon Heav'n,
His Tent ſhall be a Cobweb to my Rage.
I'll tear the ſheeted Cordage from its Baſe,
And give it to the Winds: I'll call ſo loud,
The Heav'ns ſhall echo me; and the chaſte Stars
Eclipſe with Horror at th' infernal Deed
Which his fell Heart conceives.

SCENE III. *To them*, GOTHMUND.

GOTHMUND.

What lawleſs Clamour
Breaks on my Tent?

ATHELSTAN.

What lawleſs Rapine late
Invaded mine?

GOTHMUND.

Thou ſhalt be anſwer'd bravely.—

ATHELSTAN.

I will be anſwer'd truly.—Think not, GOTHMUND,
That Frowns can terrify; or vile Evaſion
Silence my loud-tongu'd Wrongs. — Speak — tell me,
Why this audacious Inſult on the Rights [*Dane*,—
Of ſworn Alliance, and the Laws of War?

GOTHMUND.

Am I not here ſupreme? — Whate'er was won,
Was won beneath my Banner. Thou, proud Duke,
Wert but a Wheel within the vaſt Machine
That tore up *England's* Freedom. Yes, thy Sword
Was but the Inſtrument of GOTHMUND's Will.
I was the Soul, the all-directing Pow'r
That rul'd the War: Whate'er ye won, ye won
Each for himſelf indeed; but all for me.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh Falſehood, foul as Hell! What *Dane* ſo vile,
But now enjoys the Conqueſt that he reap'd?
Behold th' unpitying Riot of the Camp,
Rich with the Spoils of my poor ruin'd Country!
How ev'ry Soldier lords it o'er the Heap
Of Plunder which he won!

GOTHMUND.

So GOTHMUND wills.
But did ſo dear a Prize inrich their Tents,
As lately brighten'd ATHELSTAN's; — my Voice,
Swift as the Virtue of a magic Spell,
Shou'd leave them void as thine.

ATHELSTAN.

Curs'd Inſolence
Of barb'rous Pow'r! — Yet think not ATHELSTAN
Roll'd in the ſordid Liſt of GOTHMUND's Slaves.

I plead

I plead the Law of War; and claim my Captive.

GOTHMUND.

Thine?

ATHELSTAN.

Mine: by Right of War.—

GOTHMUND.

Hence, prating Pedant!
Thou ſhalt be frock'd, and mantled in the Garb
Worn by your Cell-bred Monks.—By Right of War?
Doſt thou not ſee, what Thouſands hemm me round,
Dreadful in creſted Helms? Theſe plead the Rights
Of GOTHMUND and of *Denmark*. Think'ſt thou, *Briton*,
We touch'd theſe Shores, to parley with our Slaves
In weak Contention? Violence is our Law,
The Sword is Valour's God: 'Twas thine this Morn:
And now 'tis GOTHMUND's.

ATHELSTAN.

Bluſh, Ingratitude! [Heart!
What Sword but ATHELSTAN's!—Down, ſwelling
No! heav'nly Pow'rs! I dare not call you down,
In witneſs to my Wrongs!—Yet this from thee!—
Oh thankleſs *Dane!*

GOTHMUND.

Go, preach thy Follies, *Chriſtian*,
To the obſcure and coward Sons of Peace.
I wing a loftier Air; where Eagle-Glory
Soars high above Reproach.—Fair THYRA's mine.
More dear than half the Spoils of conquer'd *Britain*,
Thou ne'er ſhalt ſee her more.

ATHELSTAN.

O ſtern Decree!
Yet hear me, GOTHMUND!---Hear a Parent's Pray'r!--

GOTHMUND.

A Parent's Pray'r!

ATHELSTAN.

Yes: THYRA is my Child; now ſcarce reſtor'd
To the fond Wiſhes of her aged Father,
Till plung'd in deeper Woe!

GOTHMUND.

THYRA thy Child?
A thin Pretence!—She was an infant *Dane*;
Snatch'd from a Wreck that ſunk on *England's* Coaſt.

ATHELSTAN.

That Wreck was rich with conquer'd MERCIA's Plunder.
My Child was there. Each ſpeaking Circumſtance,
The well-known Chain, the fatal Time, the Place,
All riſing into Proof, proclaim her mine:
Mine, GOTHMUND, mine: The only Pledge of Love,
Her dying Mother left. — Behold theſe Tears
That trickle down my Cheek. — Oh think what Pangs
Muſt inly rend the Heart of ATHELSTAN,
Ere he cou'd weep! — Let gentle Pity then —

GOTHMUND.

Pity! The Foe to ev'ry manly Deed!
The Bane of Victory: a timorous Child,
Scar'd at the gorgeous Pride and Pomp of War;
Fit, only fit, to rule a Woman's Breaſt!
Avaunt!—I ſcorn its Cries!—What! *Mercia's* Duke
Diſſolv'd in Woman's Tears? —

ATHELSTAN.

Yet, there are Times,
When Tears are brave and honeſt: Such are theſe:
Ennobled by Humanity and Love.
'Tis Nature pleads within me: Scorn nōt, GOTHMUND,
Her generous Feelings! — On ſome future Hour,
When Fate ſhall frown on *Denmark*; ſome dear Child,
Thy Soul's beſt Treaſure, may be torn from thee!
Woud'ſt thou not weep? Oh, timely wiſe, beware!
Nor heap an injur'd Father's Curſes on thee!

GOTHMUND.

Is this brave ATHELSTAN? Beneath whoſe Spear
Squadrons have ſunk, unequal to its Rage?
The Warrior's fled. Hence, Dotard, hence: and take
Th' effeminate Staff and Spindle; beſt befitting
A Soul ſo like a Woman.

ATHEL-

ATHELSTAN.

Hell and Horror!
Pangs! choaking Pangs!—No—burſt not yet, my
Till I have reap'd Revenge. [Heart;

GOTHMUND.

Revenge? old Man!
Hence, Traitor! — ſeek for Vengeance where thou
Haſte thee to ETHELRED: go tell thy King, [may'ſt.
GOTHMUND hath injur'd thee.—

ATHELSTAN.

Ruſh down, ye Heav'ns!
Ye pitying Thunders, rivet me to Earth!
And ſave me from this Hell-hound's Voice, that ſhakes
My Frame to Diſſolution!

GOTHMUND.

Such Reward
Shall ev'ry Traitor find.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh, I cou'd tear theſe white Hairs from their Roots!—
Curs'd be the Pine on which ye plough'd the Seas!
Curs'd be th' unhallow'd Breeze that fill'd your Sails!
Curs'd be the Tides that bore you to our Coaſt!
But doubly curs'd am I, whoſe headlong Rage—
Yes; righteous Heav'n! with Tears of burning Anguiſh,
I own thy Juſtice on me!

GOTHMUND.

Hence, vile Rebel!
Hence,—nor pollute myCamp. For know, thatTreaſon
And proſtituted Faith, like Strumpets vile,
The Slaves of Appetite, when Luſt is ſated,—
Are turn'd adriſt to dwell with Infamy,
By thoſe that us'd them.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh, for my honeſt Sword!—I burn, I burn!
And *Hecla's* Fires are here!— Th' invenom'd Shaft
Drinks up my poiſon'd Spirit.—Come, wild Fury!

Come with thy Blood-ſhot Eyes, and mad'ning Foam!
Oh, nerve me to the ten-fold Strength of Phrenzy!
That I may rend up Rocks and rooted Trees,
And hurl Deſtruction on him!

GOTHMUND.

Quit my Tent:
Think'ſt thou, a Warrior crown'd with Glory's Wreath
Can dread the Foam of headlong Rage? Or ſtand
Aw'd by the Phrenzy of a Madman's Brain!
Hence! vent thy Ravings to the ſtormy Seas:
They'll heed thee, more than I. —

ATHELSTAN.

Yes: I will go. —
Thou think'ſt me helpleſs, friendleſs, and diſarm'd:
Yet ſhalt thou rue my Wrongs. — By Heav'n I'll come
In Terror clad; more dreadful than the Peſt
That walks in midnight Darkneſs.—Yes: I'll go.
But, barbarous *Dane*! —Take heed of my Return!

[*Exit* ATHELSTAN.]

SCENE IV. *To him*, DUNELM.

GOTHMUND.

Hoa, DUNELM!
Guard each Avenue of the Camp.
Forbid yon Traitor's Egreſs: If he attempt
To 'ſcape the Watch, arreſt him: For his Heart
Labours with Ruin: He is falſe to *Denmark*. ---

[*Exit* DUNELM.]

Go, credulous Dotard! Cou'd thy Folly hope
To win the Friendſhip of thy Country's Foe?
Ev'n ſuch, thro' ev'ry Age, ſhall be the Lot
Of *Britiſh* Blindneſs, when it aids Invaſion:
The Slave of Conqueſt firſt; and then her Scorn:
The Scaffolding on which Ambition mounts;
Then ſpurns it to the Earth, a Refuſe vile,

Fit

Fit for Contempt to tread on. ---Welcome, HAROLD,
Haſt ſeen our Captive EGBERT?

To him, HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Aye, my Lord.

GOTHMUND.

Didſt thou declare my purpos'd Thought?

HAROLD.

I did.

GOTHMUND.

How did he meet it?

HAROLD.

Firſt, with frantic Rage
He ſhook his Chains, and curs'd thee by his Gods.
I told him, Rage and frantic Banns were vain.
If he reſign'd fair THYRA to thy Arms,
(Since only He cou'd win her to thy Wiſh)
Freedom was his. But if his ſtubborn Pride [waſt him
Shou'd thwart thy Will; To-morrow's Breeze ſhou'd
To Chains, to Darkneſs, and the dreary Depth
Of *Norway's* mine: while ſhe, impriſon'd here,
The Vaſſal of Deſire, ſhou'd ſate thy Wiſh.

GOTHMUND.

Did not the threatned Vengeance bend his Pride?

HAROLD.

A ſullen Pauſe took Place. His fixed Eyes
Devour'd the Ground: as if ſome mighty Thought
Labour'd within him; and to ſecret Council
Call'd inward ev'ry Pow'r; that for a while
Each idle Senſe ſtood vacant.

GOTHMUND.

What enſu'd?
That Pauſe from Rage did, ſure, beſpeak Conſent.

HAROLD.

It did. Yet with evading Speech he anſwer'd,
Cannot thy General wait ſome happier Hour,

When

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Oh, nerve me to the ten-fold Strength of Phrenzy!
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That Pauſe from Rage did, ſure, beſpeak Conſent.

HAROLD.

It did. Yet with evading Speech he anſwer'd,
Cannot thy General wait ſome happier Hour,

When

When Time hath heal'd her Woes?—On that, I told him,
Unconquerable Paſſion ſwell'd thy Breaſt;
He might as ſoon controul the Tides, impell'd
By yon fair Planet's Influence.------

GOTHMUND.

Aye: tho' Storms,
And raging Seas conſpir'd with ev'ry Orb,
To drown the lofty Shore!

HAROLD.

Such was my Hint.---
He ſaid, the burning Bluſh wou'd ſtain his Cheek,
Shou'd the ſurrounding Guard that led him to her,
Witneſs his Shame: I gave him fix'd Aſſurance,
That my Command ſhou'd keep the Guard at Diſtance:
While he, admitted to her lonely Tent,
Unheard ſhou'd plead his Life, and GOTHMUND's Love.
On this, he gave Conſent. —

GOTHMUND.

Then haſte thee, HAROLD.
Bid GOODWIN lead the Captive to his Wife:
See him recall'd: That done, draw off thy Guard
To a more diſtant Station from her Tent.
For ere the Noon of Night, on Paſſion's Wing
I'll fly, to celebrate the Rites of Love.
Yet wear a watchful Eye, intent tho' diſtant:
Haply, he means to wile her from our Camp.

HAROLD.

My Life ſhall anſwer it.---

GOTHMUND.

At length ſhe's mine.
Deceit hath colour'd o'er my bold Attempt.
Now, fiery ATHELSTAN, go curſe thy Folly:
Rave to the Winds and Seas, and rend the Air
With twice their Clamour!---Farewel, valiant HAROLD:
Speed my Reſolve: I'll to my inner Tent.

[*Exit* GOTHMUND.

HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Now, Vengeance, thou art mine!---Unthankful GOTH-
To pay my honeſt and deep-printed Scars [MUND!
With vile Neglect!---Go, headlong Fool of Paſſion!
Whoſe flattering Whiſper cou'd alone infuſe
This Dream of Hope, that EGBERT e'er ſhall ſtoop
To gather Life from Shame!---Yes, he ſhall go:
Yet not to mould her into vile Compliance,
But arm her fainting Virtue with new Strength,
Equal to this dread Conflict.---Yet, leſt Fear,
Or Woman's Weakneſs ſink beneath the Trial,
A better Hope remains:---MERCIA's brave Duke:---
Yes, injur'd ATHELSTAN! Thy Arm ſhall be
The dark and fearleſs Miniſter of Fate;
And give me deep Revenge. [*Exit* HAROLD.

SCENE V. *Changes to the open Camp.*

DUNELM. ATHELSTAN, *following.*

ATHELSTAN.

Yet hear me, DUNELM!
For Pity's ſake, relent.

DUNELM.

Peace, clam'rous Tongue!

ATHELSTAN.

What! ſhall your Guards ſpurn me with Inſolence?
Your barbarous Camp impriſon me?

DUNELM.

No more.
Within this Mound, the General's Voice is Law.

ATHELSTAN.

She is my Child! Art thou, too, deaf to Mercy?

DUNELM.

Vex me not, *Briton!*

ATHELSTAN.

But releaſe my Daughter!—
Give me my Child, and let me quit your Camp,---
My Dukedom's Wealth is thine!

DU-

DUNELM.

Thy Dukedom's Wealth?
Vain Man! Thy Pow'r is ſwallow'd up in Conqueſt:
Thy Titles vaniſh'd with thy Country's Freedom:
Thy boaſted Wealth is fled to *Denmark's* Shore:
Thy Palace doom'd for *Danes* to riot in.
Peace then: and thank our Bounty, that we leave thee
Life, and the general Air.--- [*Exit* DUNELM.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh mercileſs!
Yet, righteous Pow'rs! what Claim have I to Mercy!
Did I ſhew Mercy, on this fatal Morn,
To my poor bleeding Country; when this Arm
Made Widows childleſs!--Dar'ſt thou then, bold Wretch,
Dar'ſt thou againſt th' afflicting Hand of Heav'n
To riſe, and plead for Mercy!---Rather bow thee
Low in the Duſt!---Yes, thou ſhalt be my Bed,
[*Throws himſelf on the Ground.*
Cold Earth! Here will I lie, till Anguiſh end me!
Now riſe, ye Ghoſts of my wrong'd Countrymen!
Ye Spectres pale, riſe with your gaping Wounds,
And hideous Yell!---Bring with you dire Deſpair
From the dread Caverns of eternal Night,
Where deep ſhe dwells with agonizing Groans,
And ſleepleſs Terrors! Riſe, array'd in Blood!
Plant round your Horrors! 'till affrighted Reaſon
Start from my Brain; and I, the Prey of Phrenzy,
Like the fierce Mountain-Wolf in Madneſs foaming,
Howl to the midnight Moon!---

SCENE VIII. *To him*, HAROLD.

HAROLD.

'Twas ſure, the Voice
Of ATHELSTAN.---What! proſtrate on the Ground!
Art thou not ATHELSTAN?

ATHEL-

ATHELSTAN.

I am that Wretch
Which once was ATHELSTAN! Fair *England's* Boaſt,
I rear'd my Head in Honour: now behold me
Low-level'd with the Earth; a hideous Ruin;
Where, 'midſt the Deſolations of my Soul,
Deſpair and Anguiſh dwell!

HAROLD.

What heavy Woe
Hath weigh'd thee to the Duſt?---Speak, valiant Duke.--

ATHELSTAN.

Whoe'er thou art, Oh leave me to my Pangs!
If thou'rt a *Dane*; know, I deteſt and curſe thee.
If thou'rt a *Briton*, waſte not generous Pity,
But pour thy Curſe on Me!---

HAROLD.

Know'ſt thou not HAROLD?

ATHELSTAN.

HAROLD? My Woes had ſwallow'd all Attention:
Indeed, I knew thee not.

HAROLD.

Why this Deſpair?

ATHELSTAN.

Alas, my Child, my Child!---But thou'rt a *Dane*,
And know'ſt not Pity!

HAROLD.

Hapleſs ATHELSTAN!
The Colour of thy Grief indeed is deep:
Thou know'ſt not half thy Woes!

ATHELSTAN.

Thy Words are dark.---
Oh my prophetic Soul!---I dare not aſk thee.---
But if thou bear'ſt a Tale, with Horrors fraught,
Which Pity dreads to tell;---In Mercy kill me:
Strike deep thy friendly Sword into my Breaſt;
For I am robb'd of Mine!---My injur'd Daughter!—
Is it not ſo?

HAROLD.

The fatal Hour approaches.
For ere the Night hath won the Vault of Heav'n,
GOTHMUND, reſolv'd on impious Violation,
Will plunge her in Diſhonour.

ATHELSTAN.

Plagues and Palſy,
Diſeaſe and Peſtilence conſume the Robber,
Infect his Blood, and wither ev'ry Pow'r!---
Oh HAROLD! why,---why did'ſt thou pierce my Soul
With this heart-breaking Tale!---I knew it not:---
Blaſt him, ye Fiends!--Why ſleeps thy Thunder, Heav'n!

HAROLD.

Know, that Heav'n's Thunder ſleeps not.

ATHELSTAN.

Say'ſt thou, *Dane?*

HAROLD.

Heav'n's Thunder ſleeps not, if thou dar'ſt to wield it.

ATHELSTAN. [*Riſing.*

By Heav'n, I dare. Where is the flaming Bolt?
I'll hurl it on him, tho' with dire Rebound
It ſtrike me to the Centre!

HAROLD.

Fear not, ATHELSTAN.
Behold it here.—— [*He draws a Dagger.*

ATHELSTAN.

A Dagger! Let me graſp it!--- [*He takes the Dagger.*
Oh precious Gift; more precious than the Plank
Thrown to the drowning Wretch!---I'll to his Tent,
And plunge it in his Heart!

HAROLD.

Curb thy fell Rage.
I'll give thee ſafer Vengeance.

ATHELSTAN.

Generous HAROLD!— [Pride.—
I know the Wrongs thou bear'ſt from GOTHMUND's
Where?—when?—Oh ſpeed thee; for my Soul's on Fire!

HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Know then, I rule the nightly Watch that Guards
Devoted THYRA's Tent.

ATHELSTAN.

Indeed!

HAROLD.

The Files,
At my Command, ſhall move to ſuch due Diſtance,
That by a ſecret Path I'll give thee Entrance.
Then, when the midnight Spoiler comes—

ATHELSTAN.

Oh Vengeance!—
By Heav'n, his mangled Arteries ſhall ſpout
Fountains of Blood!

HAROLD.

Yet, leſt Suſpicion wake,
To intercept thy Entrance, or thy Flight---

ATHELSTAN.

Oh, for ſome *Dane's* Diſguiſe!

HAROLD.

I will array thee
In Safety's Garb: Wilt thou be plum'd like GOTHMUND?

ATHELSTAN.

Yes: for Revenge, I'll wear the Shape of GOTHMUND,
Or any Fiend in Hell.

HAROLD.

Come on, brave Duke.
I will prepare thee for the mortal Conflict.
Fate crown thy Wiſh! GOTHMUND hath injur'd me.

ATHELSTAN.

Yet, weigh'd with mine, thy Injuries are light:
Mine ſink the groaning Scale!

HAROLD.

The more befits thee
That mortal Weapon.

ATHELSTAN.

Yes: Revenge ſhall thank

Thy honeſt Hand, which gave it: And thou, HAROLD,
Shalt thank my brave Revenge.---Come, valiant *Dane*,
We'll roam the midnight Camp, like prowling Wolves,
Trooping in queſt of Blood! Now, injur'd Nature,
Brace my old Arm! Oh touch this deadly Steel
With more than Aconite! Give it the Speed,
And fiery Stroke of Lightning, when it ſhoots
Thro' the dun Sphere of Night; too ſwift for Thought,
Or Fear, or ſlow Defence!--Now ruthleſs GOTHMUND!
Vengeance awak'd ſhall ſlake her Thirſt in Blood;
And Juſtice, riding on the raven Wing
Of midnight Darkneſs, wrapt in clouded Wrath,
Comes like avenging Heav'n!

End of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *A grove, by* THYRA'S *Tent.*

EGBERT, GOODWIN.

GOODWIN.

BEHOLD the Path, which leads to THYRA's Tent:
This Grove, thro' which the Moon ſcarce throws her Beam;
Well ſuits thy purpos'd Privacy.—The Guards,
Which late clos'd round the Tent, by HAROLD's Order
Have left this Entrance free.

EGBERT.

The Path is dark: Nor can I aught deſcry,
Save the faint Glimm'ring of a diſtant Lamp,
That lights the inner Tent. Is this dark Path
The ſole Approach?

GOODWIN.

It is.—But if thy Purpoſe
Be undivulged Secreſy of Converſe,
Call forth thy THYRA to this ample Round,
Where neither Ear can hear, nor Tongue betray thee:
The diſtant Guard here circles round the Wood:
But on yon oppoſite Side, the Centinels
Hemm in the Tent, a cloſe compacted Body:
No Whiſper can eſcape their watchful Ear.—

EGBERT.

'Tis well: I'll call her hither. Leave me, GOODWIN;
So HAROLD gave Command. Her Weal and mine
Hang on the Purport of my Thought; which aſks
Her private Ear.

GOODWIN.

I leave thee to thy Wiſhes. [*Exit* GOODWIN.

EGBERT.

Where is my Wife!—Come forth, thou innocent Lamb,
To Slaughter doom'd!—Oh ſpeed thee; for ev'n now
The bloody Tiger, eyes thee in the Fold!
Wilt thou not hear the Shepherd's friendly Voice,
That warns thee from thy Foe?—THYRA—dear
It is thy EGBERT calls!— [THYRA!—

SCENE II. *To him*, THYRA, EDWINA.

THYRA.

My Lord! my EGBERT!
Do I once more behold thee! Oh, my Lord!
Unutterable Woe!--- [*She burſts into Tears.*

EGBERT. [*Embracing her.*

Thou Sum of all my Wiſhes!
My Soul's far dearer Part!—Yes, I will mix
My Tears with Thine: Thy Wrongs demand them all!

THYRA.

Undone! undone!—Oh EGBERT!——

EGBERT.

Deareſt THYRA!
EGBERT wou'd die, to ſave thee!

THYRA.

I know, thou woud'ſt.
Is there no means of Reſcue?

EGBERT.

None, my Love.
This Grove is hemm'd round by a Guard of *Danes*,
Who own no Law, ſave cruel GOTHMUND's Will;
Whoſe Boſom, ſacred Pity never touch'd
With ſoft Compunction; nor for other's Woe
Call'd forth the generous Tear.

THYRA.

Oh, I am loſt!

Ye Saints and Angels, Miniſters of Grace!
If ye do waft the Pray'rs of Innocence
Up to the Throne of Mercy, hear me now!
Oh, from your Manſions of unclouded Bliſs,
Let Heav'n ſend down your Siſter-Angel, PITY;
And melt his Heart's fell Purpoſe!

EGBERT.

Hope not Pity!
In vain thy Father (for I have heard thy Story)
With Tears and Grief's Intreaty ſtrove to melt him.
He ſpurn'd him with Diſdain.---But when I teli
The Tale of Shame, that heaves my throbbing Breaſt!--
Oh THYRA! hide my Bluſh!

THYRA.

What mean thy Words?
Can Fate yet ſwell the Number of our Woes?

EGBERT.

Think'ſt thou that EGBERT, for a Life of Shame,
Wou'd ſell thee to Diſhonour?

THYRA.

Heav'n forbid!

EGBERT.

On that infernal Errand am I come.
So GOTHMUND wills.---Why doſt thou turn thee from [me?

THYRA.

Am I betray'd by EGBERT?---Gracious Heav'n,
Be thou my Help! If EGBERT hath prov'd falſe,
All human Faith is vain!

EGBERT.

Thou Heav'n of Love!
Thy Virtue charms me!---On this Taſk of Shame
GOTHMUND indeed hath ſent me.---Virtuous THYRA,
Far diſtant is my Purpoſe. Think not EGBERT
Wou'd vilely purchaſe Life.---But oh, my Love,
Thy fatal Hour comes on! Ev'n now, the Ruffian,
With luſtful Rage and fierce Impatience flown,
Prepares him for thy Tent!

THYRA.

Is there not Hope,
That *England's* Pow'r, beneath the Veil of Night,
May ſtorm this guilty Camp, and give us Freedom?

EGBERT.

Heav'n ſpeed their Valour! But, alas! --- that Hope
Too late ſhall viſit Thee!---Ev'n now he comes,
To rob this ſacred Temple, where pure Chaſtity
And Honour long have dwelt!

THYRA.

Oh fatal Tidings!
Wilt thou not ſtay, to ſave me?

EGBERT.

Deareſt THYRA!
The unrelenting Guard that brought me hither,
Ev'n now expects, and ſoon ſhall tear me from thee!

THYRA.

Oh Horror!

EGBERT.

Now, my THYRA, arm thy Heart
With manly Strength: drive all the Woman thence.
Seeſt thou this deadly Steel? [*He draws a dagger.*

THYRA.

Oh welcome, welcome!
Thy Looks are dreadful, and I read thy Purpoſe.
If 'tis the Meſſenger of honeſt Death,
Behold my Breaſt! I'll bleſs the friendly Stroke;
And bleſs Thee for this laſt, moſt generous Proof
Of Faith and Love ſincere!

EGBERT.

Yes! I have read
Of a ſtern Father, who, ſeverely kind,
And deaf to ſtruggling Nature's loud Appeal,
Shed his dear Daughter's innocent Blood, to ſave her
From an Invader's Luſt:---A juſter Purpoſe
Glows in my Breaſt---Why ſhou'd the Brave and Good
Fall ſelf-devoted?---Let the guilty Heart

Bleed for its Crimes. Then take this honeſt Dagger:
And when the Robber comes, with dauntleſs Arm
Plunge it into his Heart.

THYRA.

Alas, my Lord!

EGBERT.

What? does the treacherous Blood forſake thy Cheek?
Thou who, unmov'd, coud'ſt dare it's deadly Point,
Not dare inflict the Blow! Thou lovely Weakneſs!
Courage with Softneſs join'd!---O ſweet Perfection!
Yet muſt thou ſtrike!---Oh think, how future Times,
Ages unborn, ſhall bleſs thy friendly Hand!
How the chaſte Praiſe of Matron-Tongues ſhall faint thee,
And wondring Babes, reſcu'd from Slav'ry's Woe
By this brave Deed, ſhall liſp my THYRA's Name!

THYRA.

What, ſtain my Hand with Murder! Heav'n forbid!

EGBERT.

Blaſpheme not Juſtice.---What! when thou'rt purſu'd
Ev'n to Perdition's Brink; ſhalt thou not turn,
And ſlay the fell Deſtroyer?

THYRA.

Oh, my Heart!
Alas, my Arm is weak! I am unpractis'd
In Deeds of Blood! 'Tis terrible to *think!*
What then, to *do!*---When I ſhou'd ſtrike, the Dagger
Wou'd faulter in my Hand!

EGBERT.

Let Danger rowze thee;
Fear make thee bold.---Ev'n now the Spoiler comes!

THYRA. [*catching him.*

Oh ſave me, EGBERT!

EGBERT.

Hark! the Guard requires me!
I muſt be gone.——

THYRA.

No, we will never part.

EGBERT.

We muſt! we muſt!---Hark! GODWIN calls again.
Another Moment brings Deſtruction on thee.
Speed thy Reſolves --- Farewel! --- [*Going.*

THYRA.

Oh horrible!
Give me the Dagger! [*She takes the Dagger.*

EGBERT.

Angels ſtrengthen thee!
Now, prove thee worthy of a *Briton's* Love.
By one brave Blow, redeem thyſelf from Shame;
Thy EGBERT from the Depth of poiſon'd Dungeons;
Thy groaning Country from the Scourge of *Denmark!*
Retire: he'll ſeek thee in the inner Tent;
And when he comes;—Oh Heaven direct her Hand!
[*Exit* EGBERT.

THYRA.

Farewel, my honour'd Lord!—Here am I left,
With not a Friend to aid, but this dire Weapon!
Now, pitying Heav'n, protect me!—Hark! what
In ev'ry Sound I hear the Raviſher! --- [Noiſe!---
How dreadful Silence, at the Dead of Night!
Pregnant with Horrors! --- Oh, thou fatal Weapon,
Dark Miniſter of Death! Oft haſt thou arm'd
Th' Aſſaſſin's Hand with Fate! This once befriend
Deſpairing Innocence. ---
Come, Matron-Courage! Thou who didſt inſpire
The brave *Bethulian*; and with dauntleſs Step,
Didſt lead her to the proud *Aſſyrian's* Tent!
Now aid my trembling Hand! Teach me, like her,
Fearleſs to ſtrike where Juſtice points the Blow!
That when he comes, This may revenge our Wrongs,
And ſet my Country free. --- [*She puts up the Dagger.*

EDWINA.

Hark!--- didſt not hear
The Tread of Feet, as ruſtling thro' the Grove? ---

SCENE

SCENE III. *To them* HAROLD, ATHELSTAN, *on the oppoſite Side of the Stage.*

THYRA. [*Aſide to* EDWINA.

Oh, blaſting to mine Eyes! The Robber comes!
Clad in his gorgeous Plume!

EDWINA.

Retire we hither, [*They retire to the fartheſt*
Till he hath gain'd the Tent. [*part of the Stage.*

HAROLD. [*To* ATHELSTAN.

This Way, brave Friend.---

ATHELSTAN.

Soft!---leſt the Guard
O'erhear us---Proſperouſly we have eluded
The unſuſpecting Watch.---I dread the Sound
Of my own Footſteps.---Lead me, gen'rous HAROLD,
Where I may lurk unſeen.---

HAROLD.

Thro' that blind Path,
He muſt approach her Tent. 'Tis form'd for Ambuſh:
Dark as his purpos'd Deed. Go, hide thee there.---
And when he comes---For e'er a Minute's Round
He means to come---

ATHELSTAN. [*Draws a Dagger.*

Now GOTHMUND, Fate draws near.--- [ance!
Down, throbbing Heart! Thou ſhalt have ſpeedy Venge-
HAROLD; all Thanks are poor!--[*Athelſtan enters the Tent.*

HAROLD. [*Aloud to* ATHELSTAN.

Hold thy Reſolve;
And Fate ſhall crown thy Wiſh.--- [*Exit* HAROLD.

THYRA. [*Advancing.*

Oh, dreadful Sounds,
To which, the Midnight Thunder's Voice were mild!

" Hold thy Reſolve, and Fate ſhall crown thy Wiſh!"---
Then I am loſt!---EDWINA, let us fly,—
Ruſh thro' theſe Woods, and truſt his mercileſs Guards:
They may have Pity!

EDWINA.

Rather, linger not.
Purſue the Robber thro' that gloomy Path:
Its Darkneſs aids thy Purpoſe. Haſte thee, haſte thee:
This Moment's thine: The next, perhaps, is GOTH-
[MUND'S.

THYRA. [*Drawing the Dagger.*
Then, Heav'n aſſiſt me!---Oh, thou treach'rous Arm,
Why doſt thou tremble thus!---What mean theſe Horrors,
That freeze my Blood!---Did I not hear a Voice?---
With hollow Groans, it cry'd, "Hold, hold thy Hand!"---
Infernal Fiends, why do you thus beſet me?
Hence, bloody Spectres, nor afflict my Senſe:
Go, glare on Guilt: for I am innocent!---
Avaunt, falſe Terrors!---Now be firm, my Heart!
Oh, my revolting Hand!---I dare not ſtrike.---
Hence, feminine Fear!—The Coward turns to Valour,
When goaded by Deſpair!--- [*She enters the Paſſage.*

EDWINA.

Heav'n guide her Dagger,
And bury it in his Heart!---

ATHELSTAN. [*Within.*
Oh Treachery!
Die, Villain, die!

EDWINA.

Ye bleſſed Pow'rs, protect her!

ATHELSTAN. [*Entering with his Dagger*
Whoe'er thou art, falſe *Dane*, [*bloody.*
I bear thy Life-blood on my Dagger's Hilt.

EDWINA.

EDWINA.

Who? ATHELSTAN!---What Blood?---I fear, I fear!

ATHELSTAN.

If Fate be juſt, 'tis GOTHMUND's.---Where's my
[Child?

EDWINA.

Oh, cou'd eternal Darkneſs bury Her,
Or bury Thee! Or Thunder ſtrike thee dead;
And ſave thee from that killing Sight, which ſoon
Shall turn thee into Horror, ---thou wert happy!---
For thou haſt done a Deed--- [*She enters the Paſſage.*

THYRA. [*Within.*

I bleed! I die!---
EDWINA! EDWINA!---

ATHELSTAN.

Chain'd down by Terror,
I wait the Bolt of Fate!---That Voice of Death,
Dreadful as Lightning from the Midnight Cloud,
Hath cleft my Brain!---Nor ever did the Flames
Of Hell diſcover, to the hopeleſs Damn'd,
A Glympſe of deeper Horror!---Where's my Child!---
Oh Torture, Torture!

To him EDWINA, *leading* THYRA *wounded and fainting.*

THYRA.

Help me!---Oh! my Father!---

ATHELSTAN.

Oh Heav'n and Earth! Death! Murder! Parricide!
[*She falls: he throws himſelf on the Ground by her.*
Speak, EMMA, ſpeak! How is it with thee?

THYRA.

Oh!---

ATHELSTAN. [*Riſing and traverſing the Stage.*

Can'ſt thou not ſpeak?—Hoa! help! ſhe bleeds to Death!
No Friend to help!—hear me, ye barbarous *Danes!*
Behold a Sight, ſhall make the flinty Heart

Of

Of ſavage Pow'r weep Blood!—My Child! my Child!—
'Twas I that kill'd thee! [*Kneels over her.*

THYRA.

Can'ſt thou e'er forgive—

ATHELSTAN.

Forgive! Forgive!

THYRA.

My parricidal Hand,
That aim'd an impious Blow.—Content I die:
Yes gladly yield my Life: pleas'd to have 'ſcap'd
A Fate more dreadful; had my guilty Arm
Shed my dear Father's Blood!

ATHELSTAN.

Oh Scorpion Stings!
Thou dear expiring Saint! What! aſk Forgiveneſs
Of him who murder'd thee! She faints, ſhe faints!
Oh tell thy Murd'rer, tell thy wretched Father,—
Leave me not to Diſtraction,—tell me, tell me,
Thou doſt forgive my Crime!

THYRA.

Witneſs, ye Pow'rs,
How I forgive! Kind Heav'n, aſſwage his Pangs!—
Oh EGBERT! muſt I never more behold thee!
Bid my dear Lord remember me—Alas!
My ſwimming Eyes grow dark!—Where is my Father!—
Where is my Huſband!—lay me down in Peace!
Oh Heav'n receive my Soul— [*She dies.*

ATHELSTAN.

She's dead! ſhe's dead!
Stay, bleſſed Saint! hover awhile in Air,
And take thy loſt, thy wretched Father with thee!—
That ne'er muſt be! For ſhe is fled to Heav'n,
Where Peace and Virtue dwell! Where Guilt and
Murder and Parricide, muſt never come! [Treaſon,
Open, thou Earth! Oh, drag me down, ye Fiends,
To endleſs Anguiſh! Heap the ſulph'rous Torture

On

On my accurſed Head! Exhauſt the Stores
Of heav'nly Wrath awak'd! Yet weak will be
Your fierceſt Vengeance, to that inward Hell
That Rages here — [*Strikes his Breaſt, and throws himſelf on the Body.*

SCENE VII. *To him* SIWARD *and Officers.*

SIWARD.

Hoa, ATHELSTAN, where art thou?
The King hath ſtorm'd the Camp: the *Danes* are flying:
England again is free.

ATHELSTAN.

Too late—Oh, Oh!—

SIWARD.

What means this Scene of Blood!—Ah! THYRA ſlain!—

ATHELSTAN.

Behold the Work of this accurſed Hand!
Lo, where ſhe lies!—A dark and fatal Error
With ſacrilegious Fury arm'd the Father
Againſt his blameleſs Child!

SIWARD.

Oh Sight of Woe!
Poor bleeding Innocence!—Let honeſt Vengeance
Rowze thee from Grief. To fire thy Soul to Conqueſt,
I haſted thro' the Camp; and left the Field,
Where valiant EGBERT, freed from *Denmark's* Chain,
Hath buried deep his Sword in GOTHMUND's Heart,
And leads thy *Mercians*, clad in gloomy Terror,
O'er Heaps of ſlaughter'd *Danes!*—Riſe, valiant Duke;
Riſe from this Trance of Woe! The *Danes* are flying.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh never, never will I riſe from hence!—
Go, tell thy injur'd King, that ATHELSTAN,
Wounded by Penitence, wept his Wrongs in Blood!
Tell him, thou ſaw'ſt me leaning o'er my Child,
Raving in Pangs of Horror and Deſpair,
A Sight to melt ſtern Juſtice into Tears!—

Oh

Oh tell him, SIWARD, hapleſs ATHELSTAN
Tho' guilty, yet not vile, ſelf-puniſh'd fell!—
Now die and be at Peace!—Now traiterous Heart,
Receive thy juſt Reward! [*He raiſes his Arm to ſtab*
SIWARD. [*himſelf, they prevent him.*
Prevent his Fury,
ATHELSTAN. [*Struggling.*
Off—nor tempt your Fate!—
Dreadful is armed Rage, that pants for Death;
By Ills exaſperated;—Such is mine;
Made fatal by Deſpair!—Then ſhun my Fury!
My Dagger thirſts but for my own Life Blood;
Why muſt it ruſh on yours!—Too much, too much,
My murderous Hand hath ſpilt!—Oh EMMA, EMMA!
[*He ſinks and drops the Dagger.*

SIWARD.

Support and raiſe him. --- Hear me, ATHELSTAN!
Hear Friendſhip's Voice! --- It is thy SIWARD calls.---
His Cheek turns pale.---Alas, my generous Friend,
How are thy Virtues loſt!—

ATHELSTAN.

Oh dire Event!
Was it for this, thy dear, thy virtuous Mother
Indur'd the Child-bed Pang! Was it for this,
She foſter'd thee at her chaſte Matron-Breaſt!
And, in the Fondneſs of parental Hope,
Styl'd thee the Joy of our declining Years!—
Oh fatal, fatal Blow!

SIWARD.

Liſt up thine Eyes!
In Pity to thy weeping SIWARD, ſpeak!
Hear, generous ATHELSTAN!

OFFICER.

He heeds thee not.

ATHELSTAN.

Thus to be ſlaughter'd by thy Father's Hand!
My EMMA—Oh, my Child!

SIWARD.

SIWARD.

An agonizing Sweat
Sits on his Brow: The Hand of Death is on him.

ATHELSTAN.

Oh! Oh! Oh! [*Dies.*

SIWARD.

He dies! he dies!—His ſtrong conflicting Griefs
Have burſt his mighty Heart!---Oh, ATHELSTAN!
Thy Friends ſhall weep, and ev'ry generous Foe,
Confeſs thy Virtues, and lament thy Fate!
Hadſt thou been true! what brighter Name had deck'd
Thy Country's Story! But thy tow'ring Spirit,
Deep-ſhaken by the Tempeſt of Revenge,
From its Uprightneſs tottering, bore thee down
Ev'n to Perdition's Depth --- Yet may the Woes
Which Heav'n's avenging Hand hath heap'd upon thee
Recorded ſtand, a Monument of Juſtice!
That when in future Times a King ſhall reign,
Brave, good, and juſt, the Father of his People,
Th' abhorr'd Example may avert thoſe Ills
Thy traitrous Arm hath wrought---That black Rebellion
May never rear her Standard; nor unſheath
Her guilty Sword, to aid the fell Invader!
That Faction's Sons in thee their Fate may read;
That by the Father's Crime the Child ſhall bleed,
And private Woe to publick Guilt ſucceed.

End of the FIFTH ACT.

EPILOGUE,

Written by Mr. GARRICK,

Spoken by Mrs. CIBBER.

TO ſpeak Ten Words, again I've fetch'd my Breath;
The Tongue of Woman ſtruggles hard with Death.
Ten Words! will that ſuffice? Ten Words---no more.
We always give a Thouſand to the Score.
What can provoke theſe Wits their Time to waſte,
To pleaſe that fickle, fleeting Thing call'd Taſte?
It mocks all Search, for Subſtance has it none;
Like Hamlet's *Ghoſt—'Tis here—'Tis there—'Tis gone.*
How very few about the Stage agree!
As Men with diff'rent Eyes a Beauty ſee,
So judge they of that ſtately Dame — Queen-Tragedy.
The Greek-read Critic, as his Miſtreſs holds her,
And having little Love, for Trifles ſcolds her:
Excuſes want of Spirit, Beauty, Grace,
But ne'er forgives her failing—Time, and Place.
How do our Sex of Taſte in Judgment vary?
Miſs Bell *adores, what's loath'd by Lady* Mary:
The firſt in Tenderneſs a very Dove,
Melts like the feather'd Snow, at Juliet's *Love:*
Then, ſighing, turns to Romeo *by her Side,*
"Can you believe that Men for Love have dy'd?"
Her Ladyſhip, who vaults the Coarſer's Back,
Leaps the barr'd Gate, and calls you Tom *and* Jack;
Deteſts theſe Whinings, like a true Virago;
She's all for Daggers! Blood! Blood! Blood! Iago!

A third,

EPILOGUE.

A third, *whoſe Heart defies all Perturbations,*
Yet dies for Triumphs, Funerals, Coronations!
Ne'er aſks which Tragedies ſucceed, or fail,
But whoſe Proceſſion *has the longeſt Tail.*
The Youths, *to whom* France *gives a new Belief,*
Who look with Horror *on a Rump of Beef:*
On Shakeſpear's *Plays, with ſhrugg'd up Shoulders ſtare,*
Theſe Plays? They're bloody Murders,—O Barbare!
And yet the Man has Merit — Entre Nous,
He'd been damn'd clever, had he read Boſſù.
Shakeſpear *read* French! *roars out a ſurly Cit:*
When Shakeſpear *wrote, our Valour match'd our Wit:*
Had Britons *then been Fops, Queen* Beſs *had hang'd 'em;*
Thoſe Days, they never read *the* French,—*They* bang'd *'em.*

If Taſte evaporates by too high Breeding,
And eke is overlaid, by too deep Reading;
Leſt then in ſearch of this, you loſe your Feeling,
And barter native Senſe in foreign Dealing;
Be this neglected Truth to Britons *known,*
No Taſtes, no Modes become you, but your own.

FINIS.

Lately publiſhed,

By the ſame AUTHOR,

BARBAROSSA,

A

TRAGEDY.

The SECOND EDITION.